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# **REGINALD PECOCK**

## **Churchman and Man of Letters**

**A Study in Fifteenth Century  
English Prose**

### **A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Letters of the  
Catholic University of America in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**By**

**REV. EMMET A. HANNICK, A. B., A. M.,  
*of the Diocese of Detroit***

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Nihil Obstat.

†THOMAS J. SHAHAN, D. D.,

*Censor Deputatus.*

Imprimatur.

†MICHAEL J. CURLEY, D. D.,

*Archiepiscopus Baltimorensis.*

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To  
The Rt. Rev. M. J. Gallagher, D. D.,  
Bishop of Detroit,  
this volume is  
respectfully  
dedicated.





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## PREFACE

The fifteenth century is one of the most difficult periods for the student of English History to contend with. Due to the absence of documentary evidence a great deal of conjecture and obscurity still surrounds the political, social and religious conditions of the times. However, earnest research of comparatively recent date has cast new light upon this obscurity, and conjecture is giving way to certitude, or at least conclusions are being arrived at that will, perhaps, necessitate the recasting of the traditional viewpoint.

Fifteenth century literature has also suffered from this traditional viewpoint. Scholars in their zeal to set in relief the literary attainments of the thirteenth century or to embellish the phenomenal outburst of sixteenth century originality, have either neglected altogether the fifteenth century, or have exaggerated the lines of contrast, thus leaving the stigma of mediocrity upon a period that is worthy of greater consideration.

The author of the following study first became interested in this period while pursuing a course of lectures on Early English Chroniclers given at the Catholic University of America by Prof. P. J. Lennox, Litt. D. This interest was further stimulated by later studies in fifteenth century drama under Mr. D. Nichol Smith, M. A., at Oxford.

The present work had its inception in the library of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, Oxford. This was a very happy coincidence, since at the beginning of my labours I had not yet come to the realization that the lives of the two great men, Humphrey of Gloucester and Reginald Pecock, were so intimately interwoven.

Very few scholars, even in recent times, have attempted a solution of the problem surrounding the life and works of the greatest prose writer of the fif-

teenth century. The few, three in number, have approached the question with a great deal of scholarly experience, bequeathing to us very worthy contributions. However, it occurred to me that something more could be done by a detailed study of the literary qualities of the model English prose productions of this obscure period; and that there are certain historical facts dealing with Pecoock's life that might be cleared up; but what is of still greater importance, that there is a viewpoint in dealing with such matters, one which must necessarily be taken into consideration, namely, the viewpoint of one who has a common faith with the one time Bishop of Chichester.

While in Rome I took occasion to consult the Vatican Archives, and found there correspondence that sheds light upon the interesting controversy which had its origin in the incidents connected with the fall of Pecoock. While this documentary evidence is not conclusive, nevertheless the inference to be drawn from it is that Pecoock's downfall was as much the result of the work of political foes as of his theological aberrations.

I have received helpful suggestions and a great deal of consideration from many throughout my course. Thanks are due, and here sincerely expressed to my bishop the Rt. Rev. M. J. Gallagher, D. D., Bishop of Detroit, to whom I am most grateful for the opportunities afforded me; to Prof. P. J. Lennox, D. Litt. who has been very generous in placing his scholarly experience at my disposal; to my former tutor Prof. T. Seccombe, M. A., who so kindly assisted me in gaining access to the various MSS. at Oxford; to the Rev. Graham Reynolds, B. A., who was untiring in the labour of manuscript reading, and to the officials in the libraries at the Catholic University of America, at Oxford and at Rome who were so courteous and helpful with their assistance.

EMMET HANNICK.



# CHAPTER I

## REGINALD PECOCK

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

No conclusive documentary evidence, if ever it did exist, remains which reveals the origin or ending of that singular and pathetic churchman and man of letters, Reginald Pecock, Bishop of Chichester, champion of orthodoxy and condemned heretic. His parentage and place of birth, as also his early education, remain a matter of conjecture. Wales, according to Gascoigne and Leland, was the land of his birth and that of his parentage.<sup>1</sup> Pope Eugenius, in elevating him to the See of St. Asaph, states in his bull of provision that he was "presbyterum Menevensis diocesis, in artibus magistrum ac in theologia baccalaureum," etc.<sup>2</sup>

One might conjecture with Wood that the versatile scholar of mature years spent his boyhood in preparing himself for more advanced studies. However, we find him afterwards attracting attention at Oriel College, Oxford, for on October 30, 1417, we find young Pecock elected to a fellowship made vacant by the elevation of Dr. Garsdale to the office of Provost of the college. The date of his birth must have been about the last years of the fourteenth century. Three years after his election to a fellowship we find the youthful scholar determining upon the vocation in which he was destined to rise to heights of fame and power, that would in the hour of failure serve only to intensify the humiliation of his fall. On December 21, 1420, he was ordained by Dr. Flemmyng, Bishop of Lincoln, acolyte and subdeacon. On February

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1. "Wallicus origine" Gascoigne in Hearne, U. S. 514, 516, 548. "Nazione Wallicus" Insert. Chron., in Leland Collect., tom. ii, p. 409; "relieta Cambria, patrio solo" Leland, De Scriptt. Britt. c566.

2. Reg. Staff. F15; Wharton MSS, 577, p. 31. The bull of Eugenius IV and the "Juramentum fidelitatis episcopi Assavensis" are still preserved at Lambeth.

15, 1421, he was made deacon, and on March 8, 1421, was raised to the dignity of priest, ordained on the title of his college fellowship. Shortly after this he took his degree of Bachelor of Divinity, and in 1425<sup>3</sup> he was incepted under a Cistercian monk, during the chancellorship of Gascoigne.

His persistent application to both profane and sacred literature could have no other results than success. He won not merely the esteem of his fellow university men, but the acclaim of his enemies as well, who do not hesitate in according to him the recognition that was duly his.<sup>4</sup> Of far greater importance, however, was the recognition which he received from Humphrey Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester. At this time Gloucester was the protector of the kingdom and the most powerful patron of letters in England. In him the scholar found a sympathetic and enthusiastic protector and supporter. The library which he founded at Oxford still remains a monument to his zeal for scholarship. The reputation which the young priest Pecock enjoyed amongst his fellows at Oxford did not escape the attention of the Duke, for we find him called up to court, where, as Leland<sup>5</sup> tells us, he soon became a considerable figure and was of such service to his Prince that in a short time he was endowed with ample fortunes.

In 1431, and in all likelihood through the influence of Duke Humphrey, he was made Master of the College of St. Spirit and St. Mary, Whittington College, London, to which the rectory of St. Michael in Riola was attached. Pecock refers to his residence here in his *Repressor*.

3. Gascoigne's MS. tom. ii, p. 597, gives 1445. This date cannot be sustained in the light of subsequent events. Lewis observes that Pecock left Oxford about 1445. *Lewis's Lives*, Pt. II, p. 3.

4. Leland, *Comment. de Scriptoribus Britt.*

5. Leland, *ibid.*

This is one of the particulars of his life—few in number, unfortunately—that can be gleaned from his works.

Whether or not Pecock became connected with the diocese of St. David's between this time and his elevation to the See of St. Asaph is difficult to determine, since the evidence is not at all conclusive.<sup>6</sup> At all events the next thirteen years, the greater part, and probably all, of which were spent in London, were to be fruitful in determining the interesting career of the future Bishop of Chichester. It was during these years that the Master of Whittington assiduously applied himself to a great deal of study, not merely of an academic turn but probably such as would enable him to minister to the spiritual needs of the flock entrusted to his care. Pecock had the heart of a real shepherd.<sup>7</sup> He loved his flock and any disaffection in the fold pained him. Undoubtedly at this time he came in contact with individuals under the influence of Wycliffe's teachings. Although the king had taken a strong stand for the suppression of the Lollards there still remained under cover many disaffected individuals throughout the kingdom, and in London they were in considerable numbers.<sup>8</sup> They boasted in the literature scattered in public places that they were a

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6. Lewis, Rev. John, *The Life of Reynold Pecock, S. T. P.*, Oxford, 1822, ch. I, p. 6, says: "It seems as if after this, Mr. Pecock was promoted in the diocese of St. David's in his own country, since in the papal bull of provision of Mr. Pecock to the bishopric of St. Asaph, he is styled a Presbyter or Priest of the diocese of St. David's; unless this only relates to his being a native of that part of the country."

7. Pope Calixtus III, in a rescript to the Archbishop of Canterbury for Pecock's restoration says: "Sane pervenit nuper ad noticiam nostram quod venerabilis frater noster Reginaldus episcopus Ciestrensis dudum arca salutem populi sibi commissi sollicitus quosdam Xpiane religionis et nonnullos alios contemplativam vitam concernentes tam in vulgari anglico quam in lingua [sic] latina libellos sive tractatus aut quinternos compilavit. Et deinde eis accurate, ut conveniebat, non correctis neque emendatis, diversis personis, tam clericis, quam laicis tradidit, sperans ut exinde salutares fructus eisdem personis provenirent." Archiv. Vatic. Reg. Vatic. Calixti III, vol. 462, fol. 326-327.

8. Knighton tells us ("Knighton de Event. Angliae c. 2663") "that a man could not meet two people on the road, but one of them was a disciple of Wycliffe. . . . For that they always pretended in all their

body of a hundred thousand men at least. Blessed Thomas More, commenting on this in later years, maintained that this noising that the realm was full of heretics was an artifice of theirs to embolden their party and intimidate Catholics.<sup>9</sup> The discerning of the numbers of Lollards at this time is not to our purpose. What we do know, however, on the testimony of Pecoock himself is that he knew in a very intimate way individuals, and very prominent individuals, in the sect, so much so that his knowledge emboldened him to challenge these individuals to defend themselves against very grave and serious charges made by him against their character and morals.<sup>10</sup> No scholar of the period was more intimately acquainted with the practices and teachings of the Lollards, and no scholar of the period has left such an exhaustive treatment of the subject as we find in Pecoock's various treatises. With zealous enthusiasm he championed the cause of orthodoxy. Those that had strayed from the fold he sought to win back by the gentle means of argument. If only they could come to the proper understanding of the orthodox teachings, the greatest barrier would be surmounted. To accomplish this a rational treatment of the subject in the language of the people was in his estimation a prime requisite. Undoubtedly many hours of the thirteen years spent in London were devoted to this problem, both in study and with his pen. Some of his earliest treatises were in all probability composed at this time. Gascoigne tells us that Pecoock wrote books in English for twenty years. Pope Calixtus III in a rescript to the Archbishop of Canterbury also mentions this fact.<sup>11</sup>

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discourses a great respect for the law of God. . . . By which means a great many well meaning people were deluded, and brought to be of their sect, lest they should seem to be enemies to the law of God, and the Divine precepts.

9. More, Thos., *English Works*, p. 915, coll. 2.

10. Pecoock, *Repressor* ch. XVIII.

11. Archiv. Vatic. Reg. Vatie. Calixti III, vol. 462, fol. 326-327.



We shall see more of these writings later. Our present purpose is to follow the Master of Whittington to those loftier heights to which his abilities and friendly influence were to lead him, and from which in the hour of his crowning, he was to be ignominiously cast down, amidst the caustic exultation of inferior and less scrupulous individuals.

The Protector's eye was upon him. Humphrey of Gloucester procured for his brilliant young protégé a bishopric.<sup>12</sup> John Lowe, Bishop of St. Asaph, was transferred to the See of Rochester and was succeeded in St. Asaph by Reginald Pecock. The bull of appointment raising him to the See of St. Asaph is dated April 22, 1444, in the reign of Eugenius IV. The same year, June 14, he was consecrated in the chapel at Croydon, as it appears by the register of John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England. At the same time the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him, in all likelihood by royal mandate, at any rate without keeping any exercise or act.

This procedure exasperated the puritanical sensitiveness of the zealous Gascoigne, who has bequeathed to us a lamentation<sup>13</sup> worthy of his narrowness. The value of Gascoigne's evidence, it must be borne in mind, is minimized by the colouring it receives from Gascoigne's temperament. Like Wycliffe, he had been disappointed in his ambitions. A good man, one would say, whose faults were petty, but faults making him less a man; one who

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12. Bale unqualifiedly states the fact, "De Scriptt. Britt." and Babington, *Rolls Ser. Pecock's Repressor* vol. I, Intro., p. XIII says, "There is no reason why Lewis should question the fact."

13. Doctor fuit in Oxonia per gratiam absentandi: numquam enim respondit alicui doctori pro forma sua ut esset doctor, nec aliquem actum in scholis fecit Oxonia, postquam incepit in theologia, an postea fecerit nescitur a nobis. Per omnes annos a die inceptiois suae in Oxonia usque ad diem praesentis scripturae nullum actum fecit scholasticum, nec legendo, nec praedicando, nec disputando, nec determinando." Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, vol. I, pp. 71-72, ed. Hardy T. D. 1854. Hardy, Gascoigne n. s. pp. 516-517.

perceived disaster everywhere principally because he felt his own opportunities passing, and saw younger, and in some cases, less worthy men placed in positions of honour and responsibility.

Three years after his elevation to the See of 'St. Asaph, the rising young prelate preached his memorable sermon at Paul's Cross. It was the year 1447, a portentous occasion, and a never to be forgotten sermon. It does not seem possible that Pecock was not cognizant of the popular prejudice of the time. On the contrary, it is evident that he was quite aware of the conditions. However, the seven untimely conclusions which he expounded at Paul's Cross, in which he defended the non-preaching, and non-residence of bishops, are in their temerity and boldness indicative of Pecock's most vulnerable point. Either he did not understand, or he thought himself sufficiently strong to buffet any opposition; or, feeling that his cause was just, had given no thought to eventualities. His downfall may be traced to his famous sermon. In the interval greater honours were to be his, but prejudice and the steady silent work of enemies would in due time accomplish their intent.

#### FALL AND CONDEMNATION OF PECOCK.

The impression made by his Paul's Cross sermon, certainly, could never have been foreseen by Pecock. That opposition would be forthcoming from the enemies of the Church, against whom the sermon was principally directed, was naturally to be expected, but that there should be a general resentment on the part of the bishops, whose champion he had constituted himself, could not have been anticipated by the zealous young prelate. According to Gascoigne, the young Bishop of St. Asaph was quite contented with the sermon itself, and was confident of its excellent results. He was supposed to have remarked to one Master Chapman,

"That the consequence of his opinion would be that no one hereafter would speak ill of the Bishops, or murmur about them, since by him it was made evident that Bishops are not obligated to preach, nor to do the other works of a cure of souls, as children and the common people think; but it is their office and business to oversee those who have cures."<sup>14</sup> That his championing the cause was not received with enthusiasm by the bishops seems evident from the fact that he found it necessary to draw up in Latin, supposedly for the Archbishop of Canterbury, certain conclusions in vindication of his Paul's Cross sermon.<sup>15</sup>

To perpetuate abuses was far from the intention of the Bishop of St. Asaph. He, of all his contemporaries, would be the last to make use of the privileges that he had defended in his sermon. He had preached on numerous occasions, and none of the bishops had exercised their office more frequently. But we may conjecture that it was his indiscretion, and rather sincere self-acclaiming, that nettled their lordships, a nettling that showed itself to Pecoek's detriment in the hour of trial.

Other enemies of the zealous type of Dr. Gascoigne saw disaster in the conclusions propounded by this rapidly rising court prelate. Gascoigne was not in sympathy with the measures adopted by Archbishop Arundel in 1408 to offset the abuses occasioned by the irresponsible and heretical discourses of preachers. The Archbishop had legislated that no preacher be permitted to address the faithful unless he be first approved and licensed by the bishop.<sup>16</sup> This measure undoubtedly had had a tendency to discourage preaching, and abuses arose from its being neglected, until even the supporters

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14. Gascoigne, *Dictionarium Theologicum*.

15. "Abbreviatio Regnaldi Pecoek" (MS. Bibl. Bodl. Oxon. n. 117, fol. 11-13 saec. XV). Also Babington's edit. of the "Repressor."

16. Dic. Theol. pars prima.

of the Church decried "the unpreaching prelates" and "dusty pulpits." Gascoigne saw in it nothing but disaster, and was firmly convinced that the strange malady of the throat with which the Archbishop was afterwards seized, was nothing other than a visitation from Heaven for his stand on the restricting of preachers. It was in such a charged atmosphere of overdone zeal that Reginald Pecock fearlessly enunciated his conclusions, on the face of which was to be seen a palliation of grave abuses.

This was only one group that Pecock had the misfortune to stir against himself. His was a genius for making enemies, especially at a time when his friends and supporters were most needed. As we have seen, the Lollards were professedly against him, if for no other reason than that he was a bishop, but in addition, Pecock was a prelate that had spent years in confuting their conclusions. The bishops were now evidently set against him, and continued to be until the end; the monks, in all likelihood, were not enthusiastic over his disparaging remarks when he designated them "pulpit bawlers;" nor could the king look with the best grace upon one who, in a position of prominence, did not hesitate to reprimand him publicly, and especially when his sovereign was labouring under difficulties. However, apart from all this, there is another reason not sufficiently set forth: one of greater importance than these animosities aroused through indiscretions; one more intimately working to the destruction of Pecock than even his heresies, and it is this, that Reginald Pecock had in some way stirred up the suspicion and displeasure of the reigning party.

The direct evidence in support of the contention that Pecock had fallen in grace with the court, or in some manner had, in the opinion of the authorities, placed himself amongst those who were inimical to the interests of the reigning powers, and was therefore an undesirable, and one to be feared, is not abundant. The inferences



to be drawn from the evidence at our disposal, however, are numerous and striking in support of our contention. Many of the subsequent events in his life will have no bearing or import unless viewed in the light of such an hypothesis. The insatiable and unrelenting thirst for our author's destruction was the result of powerful prejudice and enmities; factors more powerful than the subdued Lollards; more powerful than the bishops, and more powerful and unforgiving than the men of the Gascoigne type.

While the Paul's Cross sermon paved the way for his ultimate fall, still his position and influence was powerful enough in 1450, at which time he was translated and elevated to the important bishopric of Chichester.<sup>17</sup> Gascoigne attributes this promotion to the influence of the Duke of Suffolk and Walter Hart, Bishop of Norwich. To the See of St. Asaph, Humphrey of Gloucester had assisted him, and now, strange as it may seem, Gloucester's great enemy, the crafty Duke of Suffolk, assisted in his elevation to Chichester. Grave suspicions were still whispered about, and Suffolk, the Queen's favorite, was responsible in the minds of many for his part in the murder of the Duke of Gloucester. In 1448 Pecoock's friend and protector, Gloucester, fell a victim, not only to the Queen's envy and insatiable desire to rule, but also to the ambitious aspirations of her favorite, Suffolk. It is very reasonable to suppose that when in 1449 Adam Moleyns, Bishop of Chichester, was set upon and murdered<sup>18</sup> by the hired ruffians of the Duke of York's friends, the Duke of Suffolk lost no opportunity or time in elevating to Chichester, Gloucester's very intimate friend. This would at least tend to offset suspicion. Moreover, it is possible that the Queen and

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17. Archiv. Vatic. Reg. Lateranen. Nic. V, vol. 465, fol. 222-225, also Nic. V. Reg. Stafford, p. 35.

18. Summary of English Chronicles.

Suffolk had come to realize that Gloucester and his friends were, after all, true friends of the court and the realm.

Certainly Pecoek was not a sycophant. It is difficult to ascertain his motives in reprimanding the king, or in speaking disparagingly of the "sowdiens forto fighte and slee for spoile and money."<sup>19</sup> This is very clear, however, that Pecoek was incensed at something, and did not hesitate to give expression to his resentment. Whether or not Pecoek had grown very active in his standing against the ruling powers will never be known. In 1456, it is clear that he committed his last serious indiscretion. His letter to Thomas Canynge, Mayor of London, was to be his undoing. The exact contents of this epistle are unknown, but the Mayor thought it of sufficient importance to send it to the King, before whom and his lords it was read. All concerned were greatly moved by it, for it was reported to have contained "suggestions of a change of faith, popular tumults, together with scandalous imputations upon the great lords of the realm."

It is interesting to note with what promptness the lords temporal responded to this attack upon their noble persons. Suddenly, they are impelled with a burning zeal to don their armour in defence of orthodoxy, and this in spite of the fact that the delinquencies in doctrinal matters, upon which they based their accusations, had been in circulation since the publication of the *Repressor* in 1449. This zeal for orthodoxy was, undoubtedly, nothing else than a cloak to conceal their real designs of personal revenge.

In 1457 the clamour that went up against Pecoek was so great, Gascoigne tells us, that, about the feast of St. Martin, he was, by the King's command, expelled from the House of Lords in London and forbidden to

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19. *Repressor*, Part V, Ch. XI.

enter the King's presence, by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The temporal lords were so aroused against him that they refused to proceed to business, so long as he remained in the House. At the same time, in this same assemblage of temporal lords and bishops, it was decided that the works of the author of the *Repressor* should be examined. In submitting the works of his pen, Bishop Pecock requested that he might be judged by his peers. He disavowed all responsibility for any of his works that had been circulated earlier than three years previous, for, as he stated, some of them had been intended for circulation among his friends, and, contrary to his intention and wishes, had been prematurely published before receiving his final correction and his approbation. Nine of his works were submitted to twenty-four doctors, who reported to Canterbury and three other bishops appointed to hear his case, that they contained many errors. A humorous incident is recorded as having occurred in the course of the examination—George Nevill, Bishop-elect of Exeter, a youth of twenty-four years, whose appointment to the bishopric was a papal scandal, assailed the learned Ordinary of Chichester with the following admonition: "My Lord of Chichester, God, of His just judgment, wills that you undergo these indignities because you most unworthily reprov'd, and denied to be true, the writings of St. Jerome, St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Pope, as well as the works of other saints." It is stated that Nevill was not among the appointed judges, but only an onlooker. Pecock replied, "I am sorry I have so written, for I was not sufficiently well informed."<sup>20</sup>

Pecock must have failed to sense the approaching storm. Whether it was an unhealthy sense of security, or lack of the proper understanding of his enemies, and the extremes to which they were prepared to go in order to rid themselves of his dangerous person, is difficult to say.

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20. Rogers, J. T., *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, p. 213.

At all events the storm breaking about him found him unprepared. No avenue was left unexplored down which a thread of error might be traced; no benefit of the doubt was given him, but, on the contrary, the most extreme construction was placed upon his intentions, and his errors were grossly exaggerated. As we shall see more at length later in this work, he had but one ideal, and that was the defence of orthodoxy. His criticisms of popular abuses were sound and commendable; his denial of the Apostles' authorship of the Creed was not a denial of any defined article in the deposit of faith, and while his disparaging remarks about the authority of the Fathers might be construed as flippant, they could never be the foundation for an accusation of heresy. He did, however, tread on dangerous ground, and really became heretical in exalting the authority of reason over that of Scripture. It must be understood, however, that his heterodoxy in this matter has been flagrantly magnified, and that a great portion of his teaching is nothing else than orthodox teaching of the Church.

On November the twenty-first, in the presence of the Archbishop, Bouchier, and a number of other bishops and doctors, our author repudiated various conclusions, supposedly heretical, in his works. On the twenty-eighth of the same month, in the presence of an assembly of bishops, doctors and laymen gathered at Westminster,<sup>21</sup> judgment was meted out to the condemned prelate. The Archbishop addressed him thus:

“Dear brother, Master Reginald, since all heretics are blinded by the light of their own understandings, and will not own the perverse obstinacy of their own conclusions, we shall not dispute with you in many words (for we see that you abound more in talk than in reason-

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21. Gascoigne says Lambeth. See Hearne at end of Henningford vol. ii, p. 493 (Whethamstede).



ing), but briefly show you that you have manifestly presumed to contravene the sayings of more authentic doctors.'<sup>22</sup>

The Archbishop, after dwelling upon certain of the most outstanding errors, proceeded with the sentence, which was the alternative of recanting, or being delivered, after degradation, to the secular arm as fuel for the fire.<sup>23</sup> To proceed with such extreme measures against a bishop of the Church was so unusual, that one cannot help but feel that this was merely a threat, and that even in the event of a refusal to recant, the extreme sentence never would have been carried out. Certainly, there is copious evidence<sup>24</sup> to demonstrate that in the case of individuals of less importance, this extremity was resorted to only after every expedient had been exhausted in an endeavour to persuade the heretic. This is particularly noteworthy, since the state and the community were greatly disturbed, and even threatened by the advent of the Lollard heresy, which, with some justice, came to be associated in both the popular and official mind as synonymous with disloyalty and treason.<sup>25</sup>

The decision of the assembly was received by Pecock in silence. In those brief moments, his active intelligence was wrestling with a momentous decision. Some of the very few commentators, in fact the majority, thrusting their own personal view to the front rather than a judgment based on facts of our author's life, see in his final procedure weakness which they strive to palliate, and a grovelling abasement of his otherwise magnificent intelligence. These are nothing more than pet, stereotyped phrases, catchy and easily mistaken for intelligent criticism. Pecock did the obvious thing. Had he acted otherwise, his principles regarding authority, set forth in the *Repressor* and *Book of Faith*, could be naught but incon-

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22. Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 234.

23. Babington's Introd. XII-XIV.

24. Gairdner, *ibid.* vol. 1, pp. 1-2, sq.

25. This was especially true after Wat Tyler's insurrection.

sistencies. In truth, he may have had little regard for the intelligence and disinterestedness of his judges, still they represented authority to him, until he could appeal higher. His reply to the pronouncement is quite understandable. "I am in a strait betwixt two," he said, "and hesitate in despair as to what I shall choose. If I defend my opinions and positions, I shall be burned to death; if I do not, I shall be a byword and reproach. Yet, it is better to incur the taunts of the people than to forsake the law of faith, and to depart after death into hell-fire and the place of torment. I choose, therefore, to make an abjuration, and intend, for the future, so to live that no suspicion shall arise against me all the days of my life." He then made a confession of his errors and an abjuration of his heresies. This abjuration was repeated solemnly on December third at Lambeth; and on Sunday the fourth, probably at Paul's Cross before a great concourse of people, he repudiated seven particular heresies that he acknowledged to be his. They were:

- I. That it is not necessary to salvation to believe that Jesus Christ after death descended into hell;
- II. Nor to believe in the Holy Ghost;
- III. Nor to believe in the Holy Catholic Church;
- IV. Nor in the Communion of Saints;
- V. That the universal Church may err in things which are of faith;
- VI. That it is not necessary to salvation to believe and hold that what a General Council of the whole Church has ordained, approves, or determines in favour of faith and for the health of souls, is to be approved and held by all the faithful of Christ; and that what it reproves and determines or condemns to be contrary to the Catholic faith or its good morals is to be considered by them as reprovèd and condemned;

VII. (According to one MS.) It is lawful for everyone to understand Holy Scripture in a literal sense; nor is anyone bound by necessity of salvation to adhere to any other sense.

This last article is not to be found in most MSS., and seems doubtful.<sup>26</sup>

Certainly, from Pecoock's admissions in these particular errors, arises a problematical situation, the solution of which is no longer possible. Conjecture would be no solution. What may have been his motives, or what may have prompted him to such an admission, is even difficult to conjecture. From the content of his works it could never be concluded that he denied the existence of the Holy Ghost. His explicit profession in this article so frequently recurring in his *Repressor* and *Donet*<sup>27</sup> would seem to leave no doubt in the matter. As to several of the other articles—and this we will dwell on later in this work—it seems quite evident that his denial was purely hypothetical. However, the difficulty is enhanced in the light of the evidence from the rescript of Pope Calixtus III to the Archbishop of Canterbury. From this document it is clear that Pecoock, in his appeal to Pope Calixtus, made the same admission that he had erred in the aforesaid matters.<sup>28</sup>

The figure of that outstanding divine of the fifteenth century is a pathetic one. We close the book on the last sad chapter of his tragic end with a sigh. The little weaknesses of vanity that he occasionally betrays we are ready to overlook, since in his guilelessness he thought not to conceal them. Like a broken reed he lay shattered in the midst of the storm that overwhelmed him. How like the sincerity and impetuosity of another who went forth into the night and wept! Pecoock stood before his judges, a subdued individual, broken in spirit, with the

26. Babington, *ibid.* p. xlix, note; iii note.

27. *Ibid.* note 1.

28. *Archiv. Vatic. Calixti III*, vol. 462, fol. 326-327.

dream of a lifetime fleeing like the mist of the morn; a dream fathered in sincerity and personal disinterestedness. With the conviction that his aberrations had gone beyond his first principles and intent, at the same time with the realization that an unsympathetic audience were actuated by other motives than the cloak of zeal which they feigned and prepared to distort even the truth itself in their thirst for his destruction, is it to be marveled at, that he should betray in his demeanour the conviction of his heart that all is vanity? Humbly he acknowledged that he had walked in darkness and was now brought to the light of truth. His one wish was that no man give faith to his pernicious doctrines, nor read, nor keep his writings, but submit them to "my Lord of Canterbury" or his commissaries. With his own hand he delivered to the executioner three folios and eleven quartos of his writings to be consumed by the fire. As the flames arose above his efforts of years, the children of his mind, he said aloud, "My pride and presumption have led me into these troubles and reproaches." Gascoigne venomously adds that if he had gone down to the fire himself, the people would have thrown him into it.<sup>29</sup>

The shout of triumph that went up over his fall reflects upon the scoffers rather than upon Peckock. It was vicious and petty. Doggerel verses, punning upon his name and exulting in his ignominy, sang of the Peacock that had been stripped of his feathers and become an owl; and Abbot Whethamstede wrote of the impious poisoner who was compelled to spew out his venom in public so that he should never dare to reimbibe it.<sup>30</sup>

The Archbishop of Canterbury sent copies of Peckock's revocation and recantation to all the bishops of the province, requiring them to publish these throughout the various dioceses. He also commanded those "who had books of diverse works, not only of Brother

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29. Lib. Verit. 215-216.

30. Whet., u. s., 501; Gairdner op. cit., vol. I, p. 236.

Reginald, Bishop of Chichester, written in the vulgar tongue, but some others by the same brother;<sup>31</sup> that within fifteen days after the admonition, they give up these books under pain of greater excommunication."

The University of Oxford lost no time in placing its seal of disapproval upon the condemned works. In fact it had anticipated the command of Canterbury, for on November 17, 1457, a fortnight before the burning of the books at Paul's Cross, the Chancellor, Master Thomas Chandler, together with the scholars of the University marched in solemn procession to Carfax, where they burnt all of his works in their possession. The King and his zealots had a clause added to the statutes of King's College, Oxford, which had been founded by his majesty about fourteen years before. The substance of the amending clause was to this effect: that a scholar entering the college should, after a year's probation, take an oath that he would never in his lifetime favour the condemned opinions of John Wycliffe and Reginald Pecock or those of any other heretic.<sup>32</sup>

John Bury, a friar of the Order of the Friars Heremites of St. Augustine in the province of Canterbury, was commissioned by the Archbishop to write against the conclusions maintained by the author of the *Repressor*. This work of Bury entitled *Gladus Salomonis* is in Latin and is still extant in the Bodleian at Oxford.<sup>33</sup> Bury sets forth thirteen Catholic conclusions against Pecock's thirteen heretical conclusions contained in the first book of his *Repressor*.

Pecock in the meantime appealed his case to Rome. Was it before he was deprived of his see, or after, that this appeal was made? Lewis<sup>34</sup> contends that he was still acknowledged Bishop of Chichester four months

31. Reg. Geo. Nevil, Ep. Exon. fol. 38.

32. Wood, *History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford*, ed. Glutch, vol. 1, p. 223.

33. Bibl. Bodl. Oxon. u, 108, 4 to aff. 63, sec. XV.

34. Lewis, op. cit., p. 174.



after his abjuration at Lambeth and Paul's Cross. This is not possible in the light of the evidence found in the correspondence in the Vatican Archives. From this it is quite evident that Pecock lost no time in making his appeal. In a rescript of Pope Calixtus III<sup>35</sup> to the Archbishop of Canterbury dated June, 1458, it is explicitly stated that Pecock had been deprived and had meted out to him all the other censures. It hardly seems possible that, in those days of slow travel, had Pecock waited four months after his abjuration, that is, until April, 1458, his case could have been carried to Rome, tried, and returned before the middle of June, 1458.

Calixtus III was evidently very favourably impressed by Pecock's appeal. Of all those who were concerned with the case of the Bishop of Chichester, the Pope gives evidence of the broadest and most human understanding. The condemned man apparently had been very frank in his self-accusation, and the Pope, while not minimizing the unhappy phases of the situation, readily grasped the lofty motives that actuated our author. He says in the rescript:

*“Sane pervenit nuper ad noticiam nostram, quod venerabilis frater noster, Reginaldus episcopus Cicestrensis dudum arca salutem populi sibi commissi sollicitus quosdam Xpiane religionis et non nullos alios contemplativam vitam concernentes, tam in vulgari anglico quam in lingua (sic) latina libellos sive tractatus aut quinternos compilavit. Et deinde eis accurate, ut conveniebat non correctis neque emendatis, diversis personis, tam clericis, quam laicis tradidit, sperans ut exinde salutares fructus eisdem personis provenirent. Verum dictus episcopus spe sua frustratus remansit. Nam cum a quibusdam assereretur libellos sive tractatus aut quinternos huiusmodi plura continere que fidei Catholice ad-*

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35. Archiv. Vatie. Reg. Vatie. Calixti III, vol. 462, fol. 326-327.

*versa et contraria existebant, prefatum episcopum coram te evocari fecisti, libellos, tractatus et quinternos ipsos iam viginti quatuor annis clapsis per eum editos exhibiturum, quiquidem episcopus obedientie filius libellos ipsos sub certis protestationibus, videlicet: quod si aliqua in eis continerentur, que prelibate fidei Catholice contraria forent, illa tenere non volebat, nec pertinaciter defendere sed ea pro nullis et infectis habebat, coram te reverenter exhibuit, atque produxit, tuque libellos ipsos certis in Theologia magistris et in utroque jure doctoribus examinandos commisisti.”*<sup>36</sup>

A great part of the rescript is taken up with the discussion of the errors, the trial and the condemnation. From this it appears that the Archbishop had already commissioned one, John Stokes, archdeacon of Ely, to absolve the condemned Bishop from all irregularities and censures incurred, and to restore him to the enjoyment of his benefice. The Pope's intention in sending the rescript was to make regular the procedure and to supply whatever may have been wanting either in jurisdiction or procedure. The rescript continues thus:

*“Quem etiam nos auctoritate apostolica et simili scientia absolvimus et cum eo dispensamus eumque restituimus, reponimus et rehabilitamus, et infamie maculam abolemus per presentes supplendo etiam omnes defectus tam juris quam facti, si qui forsan in absoluteione dispensatione rehabilitatione et restitutione archidiaconi hujusmodi intervenissent.”*

He continues,

*“Et insuper eidem Reginaldo episcopo Ciceretren. Efficacis defensionis subsidio assistens facias*

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36. Archiv. Vatic. Reg. Vatic. Calixti III, vol. 462, fol. 326-327. We have quoted at length, for it supports our contention that Peacock's fall was due to political causes, rather than his lapse into heresy.

*eum pacifica dicte ecclesie Cicestren. Possessione gaudere, et non permittas ipsum premissorum occasione in iudicio vel extra, publice vel occulte, directe vel indirecte, aut quovis alio quesito colore quomodolibet molestare aut ei iniurias vel offensas irrogari.*"<sup>37</sup>

The bulls of Calixtus III restoring Pecock to the See of Chichester were not well received in England by his enemies. The Archbishop made representations to the King, in which was set forth that Reginald Pecock, Minister of the See of Chichester, had been detected and convicted of certain errors and heresies and had abjured and taken his penance; that he obtained surreptitiously from the Holy Father bulls of restoration contrary to the laws and "statutes provisors" and to the great contempt and derogation of his Majesty's prerogative and estate royal.<sup>38, 39</sup>

Unfortunately for Pecock, Pope Calixtus III passed to his eternal reward August 6, 1458. He was a man remarkable for his mortified life, firmness of purpose, and prudence in the face of difficulties. It was by his direction that the revision of the trial of Joan of Arc was carried out, and the sentence of the first court quashed, thus vindicating the innocence of the Maid of Orleans.<sup>40</sup>

Calixtus III was succeeded by the famous humanist, Enea Silvio De Piccolomini, as Pius II, August 19, 1458. Was there any connection between the elevation of a new pope and the reopening of Pecock's case at Rome? Be this as it may, a mandate from the King, dated September 17, 1458, at St. Albans was issued to the Bishop of St. Asaph and to Robert Stillington, Canon of York, to call together as many Doctors in Theology and Law as

37. Archiv. Vatic. Reg. Vatic. Ca. ixi III, vol. 462, fol. 326-327.

38. It is a point of interest to observe that the Archbishop himself, together with two of his assessors, Kempe and Lowe, were appointed by Papal provision.

39. Certificat. super mandate regio in causa heretici Pecock, MS. e coll. R. R. Ep. Petroburg.

40. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. III, Calixtus.

they deemed necessary to make a study of the effect and the contents of the said bulls (Calixtus III). Furthermore, they were to certify to his Majesty the result of their investigations.<sup>41</sup>

The findings of the committee were:

I. "That his Highness should send an ambassador to the pope, who should represent to him the Bishop's pernicious heresies, and the dangers accruing to the Church from them; and should desire that he should cassate his bull of restitution, and appoint to the see a pious and learned Bishop to be nominated by the King.

II. That since by the process and recantation of Pecock, they think he was infected with heresy long before he was translated to the See of Chichester, that translation was ipso facto null; and so it was lawful for the King, and expedient for the Church, that the possessions of the See, which they call "temporalities," should immediately be seized by the King, and detained by him until a catholic successor be appointed."<sup>42</sup>

Whether or not this communication reached the successor of Pope Calixtus is of no importance. But this is certain, that its contents, together with an appeal for his deprivation, were sent to Pius II. In this appeal, it is quite evident that his accusers had recourse to a very decisive measure. Pecock was accused of having concealed certain of his works in both Latin and English; to have feigned repentance at his trial; and finally to have relapsed into heresy. It hardly seems probable, even though he were feigning and insincere, that he would be so rash in the midst of his case pending at Rome so to compromise himself as to manifest by word or action any such grounds for accusation by his enemies. There is no evidence, apart from the accusation made to

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41. E Collect. White Ep. Petroburg.

42. Lewis, *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 177.

Pius II by Pecock's enemies, to the effect that he actually did relapse into heresy. Pius II was, however, greatly agitated by the contents of the appeal, for in a rescript dated April, 1459, to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, he manifests great concern about the matter, and commands that immediate steps be taken to investigate thoroughly the accusations; search out the works that had been concealed by Pecock, and if the accused should be found guilty, he was to be sent to Rome, or the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of England were to proceed against him, together with all his associates irrespective of position or standing. The guilty ones were to have meted out to them all the canonical punishments, such as degradation from office, deprivation and excommunication.

That the Pope was deeply impressed, and unfavorably toward Pecock is seen from the manner in which he speaks of him where he says:

*"Tamen idem Reginaldus protervio et nephario spiritu instigatus, et pristinarum tenebrarum cecitate obscessus, etiam postquam ipse penitens, ut videbatur, et indignus regimini et administrationi dicte ecclesie Cicester., seu omni iuri sibi in illis, vel ad ea quomodolibet competenti, sponte et libere cesserat, nonnullos ex predictis libris manifestam heresim continentes, in latino ac etiam in dicto ydiomate, a se compositos et per eum minime tunc patefactos, ut perpetuo extare possent occultare, ac sic fecte penitens in errorem pristinum, quem simulate abiuraverat, relabi, et tamquam nepharius et incorrigibilis servus, quedam alia que contra orthodoxam fidem sunt, et contra ea, que sacrosancta tenet Ecclesia machinari minime formidavit, propter que omnia maximum imminet periculum, ne dicte hereses taliter in ipso regno disseminate magnorum pariant fomenta scandalorum, et plurium ingenia subvertant et animarum pericula generent."*<sup>43</sup>

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43. Archiv. Vatic. Reg. Vatic. Pii II, vol. 499, fol. 63.

In the bull appointing Pecock's successor to the See of Chichester, Pius affirms the guilt of heresy of the former incumbent of the See. He also states that all the rights to the See had been given up by Pecock. However, there is a problem arising from the discrepancy in dates of the various documents. The bull appointing a successor in Chichester is dated January, 1458. Pius II, however, did not ascend the throne until August 19, 1458. The rescript to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, in which a thorough investigation is demanded, is dated April, 1459. Was Pecock's successor appointed before the investigation? Supposing the appointment to have been January, 1459, the discrepancy being due to the carelessness of a scribe, it appears even then that the appointment was made three months before the investigation was ordered.

Pecock's career is overshadowed with the mysterious. At almost every turn there is a lack of evidence, especially facts about his own person. From the facts at our disposal, one cannot but surmise that something other than the lofty motives of defending orthodoxy was actuating his enemies. For twenty years he remained unmolested in his errors until he clashed with the civil political party. From that time until his downfall this mysterious power worked, cloaked under a disguise. Pecock passes from the stage. His cause was lost. Mystery shrouds his passing as it shadowed his advent. We know that he was sent to the abbey of Thorney on the Isle of Thorney in Cambridgeshire. Provision was made for him, some say an ample provision, others say meagre. How long he remained here would be mere conjecture. He passes without applause of contemporaries, with his errors and his rashness, but with his lofty motives . . . and, we think, misunderstood.



## CHAPTER II

## LOLLARDY, ITS CAUSES REMOTE AND PROXIMATE

We must now see something of those various influences that contributed to the change so noticeable in every phase of English life in the year 1447. Similar forces were, and had been, at work in every country of Europe, and these same forces, at least in their effects, were to continue until what is called modern Europe and modern civilization should be evolved.

We are not concerned, however, with the continent nor with modern civilization, but approach the various contributory factors only in so far as it seems to us that they were responsible in bringing about the religious and social conditions, to the alleviation of which Reginald Pecoek had dedicated the greater part of his life and talents.

Transition periods, whether social, political, or religious, are not circumscribed. Our computations of them must be relative and not absolute. Historians can define, for the most part, only proximately, the limits of any given period in history. Phenomena that we observe on the horizon of history, like a beautiful sunset or the breaking of a tumultuous storm, are the result of a whole series of circumstances so remote and minute that it is impossible to exhaust them. This fact, together with new discoveries and change of viewpoint, is what gives occasion for the rewriting of history. Moreover, it is for these very reasons that the writing of history is difficult, and especially the history of transition periods.

Reginald Pecoek, the subject of our inquiry, belongs to one of these transition periods. That outstanding ecclesiastic of the mid-fifteenth century can be understood only when viewed in relation to his own times; and

his own times, if isolated from the history of his country for at least a century preceding, remain in the realm of conjecture. His own parents must have lived in the trying times of the Great Pestilence. In his boyhood he might have heard the men and women of the generation just preceding him, tell stirring tales of the uprisings under the leadership of Ball and Tyler; and, in later years, when he had attained to a position of authority and responsibility, it was brought home to him very strikingly what evil results and havoc religious dissension was begetting amongst his own flock and throughout large sections of the kingdom. A scholar, a zealous churchman, fearless unto rashness, with a consciousness of his great responsibility, he entered the lists in defence of orthodoxy and to deery the evils of his day.

The widespread and far-reaching consequences of the social unrest and religious dissension could not have been entirely due to the age in which they manifested themselves. Predisposing causes there must have been, even back in the distant past. No one cause can account for them; nor can we reach out and lay our finger upon any individual, or group of individuals, or upon any one event, or series of events, and say absolutely this individual or this happening is responsible for the unhappy state of affairs against which Pecoek thrust his strength. We must go back one hundred years, or better, to the accession of Edward II. To confine ourselves to this period is somewhat arbitrary, but to a great extent justified by the very nature of the period. Undoubtedly, one might trace the course to other predisposing causes in the preceding century, but the period I have designated seems to be the most obvious turning point in the history of events. It seems the beginning of a new era, an era of turmoil and strife, of wars and rumours of wars, and all the evils accompanying wars: famine, pestilence, taxation, depression, poverty. It was to be an era of intrigue and selfishness, and of small men.

Transition periods seem to work according to invariable rule. In social and political life, particularly when there is the passing of an old order, these changes are never accomplished peaceably. A new era is observable with the accession of Edward II. So full of contrasts is the change that the student of history may not ignore it. We pass from an age of greatness to an age of mediocrity; from an age of strong men both in church and state, men of a strength and stature to set aside personal advantage in the interest of God and their fellowmen, to an age of small men. We leave behind the thirteenth century which Bishop Stubbs<sup>1</sup> very aptly calls the golden age of English churchmanship, the age that produced one Simon among the earls, produced among the bishops Stephen Langton, St. Edmund, Grosseteste and the Cantilupes. The Charter of Runnymede was drawn under Langton's eye; Grosseteste was the friend and adviser of the constitutional opposition; Berksted, the episcopal member of the electoral triumvirate, was the pupil of St. Richard of Chichester; St. Edmond of Canterbury was the adviser who compelled the first banishment of the aliens; St. Thomas of Cantilupe was the chancellor of the baronial regency. These men, all without exception, had the greatest love and esteem for the authority of the See of Rome, but their respect and obedience were rational.

This age of giants both in church and state was followed by an age of inferior men. Edward II stands in marked contrast to his great father, Edward I. Often the advisers whom he drew about him were of his own inferior calibre. He was neither an accomplished knight nor a great commander.<sup>2</sup> Lacking in the kingly ideal, he had neither kingly pride nor sense of duty; an idler without piety, he had no high aims, and no policy but the cunning of unscrupulous selfishness. He was often de-

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1. Stubbs, *Constitutional Hist. of England*, p. 313, 1887.

2. Mon. Malmesb. p. 136; Cron. Ed. I, II, ii, 192.

scribed as worthless. His faults were quite as much negative as positive; his character was not so much vicious as devoid of virtue. With the pursuit of amusement the one aim of his life, it can be readily ascertained what a puppet such a character would be in the hands of an unscrupulous court.

These circumstances, beyond doubt, play an important role in determining the tenor of the incoming era which contrasts so clearly with the period just passed. Such influences do not begin to show their effects until the age of decline sets in. Despotism thwarted, chafing under the restraint of constitutionalism and wounded in pride, sought advice from favourites, rather than from duly constituted guides. Then it was that the weaklings, the sycophants, the ministers of the king's pleasures, and the companions of his follies, became a degrading influence and a menace to society. To this one influence must be attributed a goodly portion of the responsibility for the great evils of the times. Had it ceased with the passing of one weak monarch, the eventual storm that broke upon the whole realm might have been averted, but it continued until the social fabric of England was on the verge of collapse. "It is to the action of the court," says Bishop Stubbs,<sup>3</sup> "that we must attribute the extravagance, the dishonesty, the immorality, private, social and political of the period; it is to the antagonism between the court and the administration, between the curia and the camera, or in modern language, the court and the cabinet, that many of the constitutional quarrels of the century are owing; it is to the unpopularity of the court that the social—as distinct from the constitutional—disturbances are chiefly due, and to the selfish isolation of the court that much of the national discontent is to be traced." He goes on to say, "A body of courtiers, greedy of wealth, greedy of land and titles, careless of the royal reputation and national credit, con-

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3. Stubbs, *ibid.* p. 325.

stantly working to obtain office for the heads of one or the other of its factions, using office for the enrichment of its own members, contained in itself all the germs of future trouble. In rivalry with the baronage which collectively looked upon the courtiers as deserters from its own body, although the barons individually, or the several factions among them, were ready enough to play the part in their turn; in rivalry with the clergy whose political power they begrudged and whose religious influence they uniformly thwarted; in rivalry with the ministry which, if it were composed of honest men, was in hostility to the court as a whole, or, if it were itself the creation of one-half of the court, was in hostility to the other.”<sup>4</sup>

Bishop Stubbs gives a very fair statement in his summing up of the situation. However, it must be borne in mind that we must not speak in superlatives and foist the whole blame for the evils of the day upon weak kings and unscrupulous courts. There were extenuating circumstances in this period over which no one had any control, such as famine and plague, and especially the great Black Death. The social and religious conditions of the period cannot be treated adequately without taking these into consideration. However, we cannot ignore that the Church both in England and abroad was passing through a serious crisis. The “exile” of the papacy at Avignon under French influence—and France was England’s implacable enemy; the incessant wars with Scotland and France, draining the treasury and crushing the people with unbearable burdens of taxation; the Great Schism in the papacy; the interminable struggle between the temporal and spiritual power; all these, in order to have a proper prospective of the situation, must be taken into consideration.

The great change and decline so obvious in the reign of Edward II unfortunately did not pass with him. Evils then set afoot grew more serious with time. Plotting,

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4. Stubbs, *ibid.*, p. 326.

treachery and internecine warfare continued throughout the period of which we speak. Revolution and regicide destroyed two kings and placed upon the throne a dynasty which was never sure of its position; foreign wars continued, followed by famine and disease; daily the people grew more restless and helpless under the burden, until it needed only the socialistic and revolutionary principles of John Ball and John Wycliffe to apply the torch that ignited a conflagration which threatened to sweep before it all semblance of law and order. England had had weak and despotic kings before, but she had strong men amongst the nobility, and strong men amongst the churchmen. A few Langtons, Grosseteste, or St. Edmunds might have tided over the crisis. The unfortunate and the depressed would have had shepherds worthy of their confidence.

Those of us who have a filial interest in Mother Church cannot, in the face of the record of human weakness shown in certain prominent individuals of the Church of this age, rise to very sublime heights of enthusiasm over this period. Not England alone, but all Christendom, felt the effects of the Avignon experiment and the confusion of the Great Schism. To gloss over such glaring historical facts is neither scientific nor moral. God does not want our lies. In the first volume of the Councils the learned Labbe remarks, "Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis indiget Ecclesia." How presumptuous, inconsistent, absurd and immoral that individual must seem who would attempt to defend truth by untruth. Newman's<sup>5</sup> remarks are quite to the point when he observes thus, "the endemic perennial fidget which possesses us about giving scandal: facts are omitted in great histories, or glosses are put on memorable acts, because they are thought to be not edifying; whereas, of all scandals, such omission, such glosses are the greatest." Leo XIII, that unique churchman,

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5. Newman, *Historical Sketches*, ii, p. 231.



statesman and scholar of the nineteenth century, gave a new impetus and direction to research and the writing of Church History when, in his encyclical, he gave the following comforting advice: "The Historian will be all the better able to manifest the Church's divine origin, so far transcending all that is purely terrestrial and natural, in proportion as he is faithful to keep back nothing of the trials which she has had to experience in the course of the ages through the frailty of her children, and sometimes even of her ministers. Studied in this fashion, the history of the Church itself affords a splendid and conclusive proof of the truth and the divinity of Christianity."<sup>6</sup>

The religious unrest, to which we have already alluded, was not restricted to England alone. It was not the case of the branch of a great tree paling under a withering blight, but rather it was the case of a great tree having its vigour taxed to the utmost under the clinging attack of parasitical growths. The Mother Church was sick and her impaired efficiency reacted upon every member of the great family. The "exile" of the Papacy at Avignon, which finally ended with the Great Schism in the Papacy itself, is certainly accountable, not wholly, but to a great extent, for a great many evils of the time.

These evils, against which the real reformers raised their voices of warning, can be attributed to a category of proximate causes, such as we have mentioned before, but remotely and finally they are traceable to causes that are intellectual. One is struck by the ascendancy of the dilettante in the theological schools. There was a great deal of mediocrity among the theologians who seem to have been concentrating upon the fantastic and the novel in religion. As an example of this, we see in the writings of the times the most extreme and antithetical views set forth on the question of pontifical authority,

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6. "Encyclical to the Archbishops, Bishops, and Clergy of France," 1899.

its foundation, rights and privileges. On the one hand, we find such men as the Dominican John of Paris attacking the temporal power of the Church, while Marsilius of Padua attempts to undermine the doctrine of the spiritual authority of the Pope, the primacy of St. Peter, the power of the Keys. The Englishman, William of Occam, and some of his revolutionist Franciscans, go farther in their advice to Louis of Bavaria in that unhappy struggle with John XXII; "Defend yourself," they advise, "with the sword and we will come to your aid with the pen." Such "thunder" crashing from the lips of adventurers like Robert Knelles, Arnaud de Cervale or Raymond de Turenne would have a note of consistency, but falling from the lips of churchmen, it manifests at least a confused notion of the papacy. On the other hand, the reactionary teachings against these excesses went to the other extreme, and were as disastrous for the discipline of the Church as any doctrine ever expounded. Augustine, the general of the Augustinians, ascribed to the successor of St. Peter a wholly exaggerated power and authority; his power and authority, even over all things temporal, were unlimited. "The Sovereign Pontiff," he said, "himself does not know how far his supreme authority can extend."<sup>7</sup> We see one faction, who were revolutionists, fawning upon the temporal monarch, while the other extremists flattered the spiritual sovereign. Chaos reigned in the schools. In the midst of these doctrinal monstrosities, a true idea of the Church, her head, her magisterium, and her rights, was obscured in the eager pursuit of the novel thing in doctrine. In the light of this, the events at Rome and Fondi, the crisis of 1378, and the double election which resulted, can be better understood. These events were not the original causes of the Schism, but only the occasion for the free development, extension and continuation of latent errors. The cardinal electors and the principal

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7. Summa de potestate ecclesiae ad Joannem xxii, q. 1, a. 1.

upholders of each of the two obediences were imbued with ideas taken from the great schools. On the other hand also, the jurists by whom the princes were surrounded, the "milites legum" who inspired their counsels, had listened to the pernicious maxims of Peter Dubois and Marsilius of Padua. They were sure of a favorable hearing when, with theories of autoeracy, they flattered the interests of kings.

The fantastic teachings of the schools, so effective in occasioning the Great Schism as well as the evils of the Avignon administration, undoubtedly reacted upon the morals and the ecclesiastical discipline of the time. A liberal latitude is allowed to the various schools in thrashing out points of doctrine still open to discussion. Thus it has ever been. But it is only when these opinions, held by the different schools, are taken from the lecture hall and heralded broadcast, that they become a menace. It is amazing to find among the writings of this time so many theological propositions that border on the fantastic. The budding young doctor of the school seems to have taken a particular delight in going to the extreme edge of orthodoxy, and often under the guise of a hypothesis, to have wandered far beyond it. The authority of the pope was one of the favourite fields in which they indulged their inclination to scholastic gymnastics. Many of the errors since condemned had their counter part, if not their origin, in some of these very theses expounded by young men in their search for novelty rather than truth.

We now turn from the erroneous principles enunciated at the time to observe some of their effects. With the centre and head of Christendom so disturbed, certainly we can look for abuses and abnormal happenings. Real reformers, from cloister, altar, and the world, raised a warning cry, but the cry was unheeded until almost irreparable evil had been accomplished. Like St. Ber-

nard<sup>8</sup> at an earlier date, St. Catherine of Siena, that most extraordinary woman, did not hesitate to point out the abuses that existed in the very court of the pope. She was disappointed in the Roman court; expecting to find there a paradise of virtue, she laments that she found there an odour of hell.<sup>9</sup> The great Catholic poet, Dante, "theologus Dantes," does not spare even those in the loftiest positions, but confines them to the lowest depths, and with all the vehemence of his magnificent genius lashes the abuses and corruptions of his day. To the Donation of Constantine, which he mistakenly thought genuine, he attributed all the evils that had come upon the Church.<sup>10</sup> Petrarch calls Avignon the "Babylon of the Apocalypse," and blackens it with all the exaggeration of a poetical mind. The anonymous author of the "Songe du Vergier" re-echoes all the hatred of the lawyers against ecclesiastics, and all the attacks of free-thinkers upon clerical morality.<sup>11</sup> The complaint of St. Antoninus, at a later date, is far more important. It sounded like the warning and resentment of a Grosse-teste or a St. Edmund at an earlier period in England.<sup>12</sup>

All evidence must be weighed dispassionately; various circumstances that modify the value of evidence left behind must be considered. Poets are not historians, nor have they the mental mould of the historian. Then too, we know that it is not an uncommon happening in the history of literature, for a sensitive writer when in a satiric mood to vent the venom of his spleen upon a class, when, in reality, only an individual or a group of a class have enraged him. There is also that category of laymen, the puritanical laymen, who wax wroth at a moment's notice, burning with a holy interest in things

8. St. Bernard, *De consideratione* lib. i, iii & iv.

9. Bollard, *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis*, t. iii, p. 891. Pastor, *Histoire des Papes*, ii, p. 135.

10. Dante *Inferno*, xix and xxvii; *Purgat.*, vi; *Paradiso*, xxii and xxvii. Also cf. Ozanam, *Dante et la philosophie Cathol.*

11. *Somnium viridarii* (ed. Goldast, 1614) t. ii. p. 61, ff.

12. *Chron.*, p. iii, c. i.

religious, but in reality, nursing the fire of revenge for having been retarded on the road to honour or to some financial goal. They are found in every age.

Undoubtedly there were abuses. Justice demands, however, that we recognize the worth of a vast army of individuals in every walk of life, about whom history is silent. Chaucer tells us about the Pardoner, but he also tells us about the faithful Parish Priest. History records the work of the pardoner, it is unusual and exceptional; but the usual, the expected, slips noiselessly into oblivion. Is not this silence and oblivion a litany of praise in itself?

The general disorder that prevailed within the Church became more chaotic in the midst of the confusion that reigned without. International bands of mercenary ruffians, with fire and sword, threw the greater part of Europe into confusion. Under the leadership of such adventurers as Robert Knolles, John Hawkwood, Arnaud de Cervale, Raymond de Turenne, Eustach d'Auberchicourt, Geoffrey de Boucicault, puppets of rival kings, monasteries and episcopal residences were fired and pillaged; chapters and estates were reduced to pauperism. In the confusion, bishops fled from their posts to Paris or Avignon; ecclesiastical discipline in the monasteries and dioceses became relaxed, and the ecclesiastical authorities became helpless, as can be seen from the replies of the popes to the appeals made to them. Disorganization is perpetuated and intensified. In vain do good bishops protest; and futile are the entreaties and threats issued by the general chapters of the religious orders.<sup>13</sup>

The widespread decline and mediocrity is seen from the absence of that real churchmanship and statesmanship which has generally characterized the reign of ecclesiastical superiors throughout the ages. The spirit of faction had got hold of the Church. Bishoprics and other responsible posts were looked upon as rewards for

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13. Martene and Durand, *Thesaurus*, t iv, p. 1206, ff.

the protégés of some factional leader. Often sons, and sometimes the unworthy sons, of noble families were thrust upon the Church. The choice of such individuals was often not based upon the qualities of the individual or the needs of the position, but too often was made for no other purpose than to enjoy the pecuniary rewards of the position or the influence accruing to the faction from the lofty post.

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that the Church suffered from the exercise of legitimate rights. "Annates," "reservations" and "expectations"<sup>14</sup> are rightfully within the sphere of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Grave evils and serious harm to the Church arose from the abuse of these rights. These abuses were not confined to the lesser superiors but were sometimes to be found among certain of the popes. This was particularly true of the Avignon popes. The extravagant and worldly-minded court at Avignon was often in need of finances that were not forthcoming from the normal channels of revenue. As a result, we find bishoprics, abbeys, parishes, priories and capitular appointments seized and handed over to laymen, some of whom were not even in the Church; or given to nephews who were profligates, or to lay prelates who held a plurality of benefices illegally. To ascertain the inestimable harm that followed this period for generations, one has simply to turn over the pages of history. Pastor suggests these dire results in his observations, where he says in part, "the financial system adopted at Avignon contributed more than is generally supposed, to destroy the prestige of the Papacy, and singularly facilitated the work of our foes."<sup>15</sup>

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14. D. V. Berliere, "Inventaire analytique des Libri obligationum et resolutionum des Archives Vaticanes, 1904 (Paris, Champion), Preface V-XXV, and also Inventaire analytique des "Diversa Cameralia" 1906, ibid. Samaran; Mollet, *La Fiscalité pontificale en France, an. XIV<sup>e</sup>, siècle* (Paris, 1904).

15. Pastor, *ibid.*, t. i, p. 87.



Thus far, we have a general view of the principal evils that contributed to the unsettling of social and moral conditions in Europe as a whole, during the fourteenth, and first part of the fifteenth centuries. The treatment is not in any way detailed or exhaustive, but is sufficient for our purpose.

Let us see how religious affairs in England were proceeding during the same period. Here we find an incessant struggle between the temporal and spiritual powers. The lingering dispute was interminable, the result of a misunderstanding of respective rights, and of a great deal of unwillingness to respect them when understood. It is not that the English people looked upon the spiritual power of the pope as a usurped power, a Roman tyranny. The testimony of history sets forth the opposite. It cannot be said that there was ever any general discontent arising from the Roman jurisdiction in matters spiritual. Jurisdiction, or rather, effective jurisdiction depends upon the willingness of the subject to submit to constituted authority. Temporal jurisdiction may be perpetuated effectively by the assistance of various sanctions; but in the case of a spiritual authority imposing itself upon a community or nation, its perpetuity and effectiveness is beyond comprehension unless the individual accepts it for loftier motives than those of mere expediency. Gairdner, in writing of the Roman jurisdiction in England, says, "That Rome exercised her spiritual power by the willing obedience of Englishmen in general, and that they regarded it as a really wholesome power, even for the control it exercised over secular tyranny, is a fact which it requires no very intimate knowledge of early English literature to bring home to us. Who was 'the holy blissful martyr' whom Chaucer's pilgrims went to seek at Canterbury? One who had resisted his sovereign in the attempt to interfere with the claims of the papal Church. For that cause, and for no other, pilgrims who went to visit his tomb regarded him

as a saint. It was only after an able and despotic king had proved himself stronger than the spiritual power of Rome, that the people of England were divorced from their Roman allegiance; and there is abundant evidence that they were divorced from it first against their will."<sup>16</sup>

The first care of the Church must always be to appoint good bishops, the shepherds of the flocks. It is not sufficient that vice be absent from their lives, but their virtues must be unmistakable and positive; not merely one outstanding virtue, such as learning, or holiness, but rather a combination of many virtues of a high degree. A bishopric has always been a position of respect and power in the community. Its influence, when conscientiously directed, cannot but be for the welfare of the whole community. When in the hands of a weak man, its very omissions are the source of irretrievable losses; and in the hands of an unscrupulous man, its faults are disastrous. The bishops of the medieval Church were not only powerful spiritual lords, but powerful temporal lords as well. They formed an estate<sup>17</sup> in the administration of temporal government just as did the nobles and the commons who made up distinct estates in themselves. After the concessions of the Magna Charta the right of choosing bishops was given to the chapters. On the vacancy of a See, the chapter solicited a *congé d'élire*, and chose by the majority of votes or by compromise, the incumbent who was presented by them to the king for approbation. The approbation was signified to the metropolitan, or to the pope if it was an archbishopric. If the election was confirmed by the metropolitan or by the pope, respectively, the king, notified of the confirmation, received the homage of the new bishop and conferred on him the temporalities of his see.<sup>18</sup> How readily this system would lend itself to complications and abuses,

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16. Gairdner, *op cit.*, chap. 1, p. 5.

17. Rotten Parliament i 189 and ii 450.

— 18. Rot. Parl. IV, 61.

just as any system may, is seen at a glance. The chapters in their zeal to secure proper candidates and to exclude undue influence in the choice, overburdened the system with minute regulations. Complications of various natures arising in the chapters often necessitated an appeal to the pope or to the metropolitan, who in turn was often influenced, in the period of which we speak, by an interested and unscrupulous court at Rome, and especially at Avignon, or by an ambitious king or faction at home, to appoint unworthy men, or men unfitted for the high office. Too frequently we find bishoprics given to favourites. Gradually the popes for various reasons withdrew the privileges of the chapters, and reserved to themselves the right of "provision" to Sees. Often this proved to be a great safeguard in selecting a good man, but unfortunately, too often it became a source of abuse.

It is interesting to note the number of "provisions" made in the reign of Edward II, during the pontificate of John XXII. Previous to this, direct papal nominations were exceptionally made, but henceforth, it almost became the practice. According to the testimony of Robert of Reading, John XXII reserved to himself the nominations of English bishops because he was disgusted with the appointments made through the influence of Edward II.<sup>19</sup> This evidence does not come from friends, since the Westminster monks were not friendly to Edward II. Professor Tout observes, however, that "John did provide to the English Church some very unworthy clerks, but he also stopped some of the worst jobs which the English government wished to perpetrate."<sup>20</sup> Between 1307 and 1316 there were only two individual English prelates appointed directly by the pope. These were Walter Reynolds, a member of the king's household, made Bishop of Worcester 1309, and translated to Canterbury 1314, and Walter Maidstone

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19. Robert of Reading, Flores. Hist. iii, 175 and 176.

20. Tout, *The Place of Edward II in English History*.

Bishop of Worcester in 1314. Between 1317 and 1326 ten bishops were appointed by papal reservation and provision. These were: 1317, Thomas Cobham to Worcester, Louis of Beaumont to Durham, and Adam Orleton to Hereford; 1320, Rigaud of Assier to Winchester, and Henry Burgherish to Lincoln; 1323, John Eaglescliffe to Llandaff, and John Stratford to Winchester; 1325, John Ross to Carlisle and William Airmyn to Norwich.<sup>21</sup> In this list of appointments we find the aristocratic Louis of Beaumont and Henry Burgherish who stood well with pope and government; respectable officials like Roger Northburgh; and scandalous self-seekers of the official type, such as Adam Orleton, John Stratford and William Airmyn. Two were Frenchmen, Beaumont and Rigaud of Assier. Thomas Cobham was the only one of a high spiritual type. He was the "good clerk," the "flower of Kent," the distinguished academic teacher who received in his promotion to Worcester some consolation for having had his election to Canterbury set aside in favour of Walter Reynolds. The two other bishops created by John XXII had at least the merit of not being politicians. Professor Tout goes on to say that after 1322, John XXII deserved credit for rejecting the nominees of Edward II, as rigorously as he ruled out those elected by the chapters. He quashed the election of Robert Baldock to the See of Norwich and so saved England from an unworthy bishop.

In providing spiritual heads for the Church, the pope was undoubtedly acting within his rights. His interference in temporal affairs, such as the appointing the temporalities of the See to whomever he chose, whether Englishman, Frenchman or Italian is a very debatable question. Foreign prelates enjoying the revenues of an English bishopric were not uncommon in this period. There are instances in which such prelates never were within the borders of their territory. Apart from all this,

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21. Tout, *Ibid.* p. 231, footnote.

the real struggle centred around the control of the appointments to bishoprics. Kings and factions on both sides did not hesitate to prostitute these most sacred offices to the attainment of their own petty ambitions. In doing so they violated the sacred rights of the spiritual authority.

The greatest evils arose from the "provisions" to inferior benefices. Later in the century, about the time of the outbreaks of John Ball and Wycliffe, the evil of these abuses cried to heaven for vengeance, because there was no one to overturn the tables of the money-changers and scourge the buyers and sellers from the temple of God. Livings were given to foreigners who neither knew the language nor resided in the kingdom; pastors absented themselves from the care of their flocks, manifesting no interest in them other than reaping the revenues; parishes and benefices were turned over to laymen for exploitation; and inferior, illiterate, and poorly recompensed clerics were left to be the leaders of the people.

These abuses continued practically throughout the period of which we treat. They increased in numbers and seriousness as time went on, and other forces contributed to the general breakdown. It must be borne in mind that there were many excellent prelates and priests in the midst of all this lax discipline. There were many others who, while being men of good morals and noble ideals, were nevertheless products of the age and victims of a vicious system. Many too, especially following the Black Death and in the time of our author, were of mediocre ability and false ideals. Under Henry IV and Henry V there was hope that something by way of reform would be accomplished, but like their predecessors, they were preoccupied in the war with France.

We have seen something of the opening of this period of moral and social decline in the reign of Edward II and his more immediate successors. Let us now dwell

more in detail upon the closing years of our period. It was during this time that Pecoek grew to manhood, emerging from obscurity to a position of prominence and influence. Undoubtedly much of the zeal for reform, so manifest in his administration in after years, was the outcome of personal experience as a young priest and especially his experience in London. Reginald Pecoek was not a mere denouncer of evils; his criticism was constructive. Another, a contemporary, full of zeal and full of destructive criticism, Dr. Gascoigne, of whom we have already spoken, has bequeathed to posterity some interesting bits of ecclesiastical gossip on the evils of his day. There is certain exaggeration in it, for Gascoigne revels in superlatives, and a deal of truth about it that throws light upon the unrest and the spread of Lollardy. Speaking of the grave neglect of bishops in the duty of preaching, he says that even the people cried out against them in these words, "Woe to you, bishops who are so rich, who love to be called lords, and to be served by others on their knees, who ride attended with so many and pompous horses, and who will do nothing for the salvation of souls, by the preaching the Word; for they either know not how to preach, being entangled in worldly business and bodily pleasures, or they cannot preach truly without preaching against those evils of which they themselves are guilty."<sup>22</sup> Speaking of non-residence of bishops he says, "Before King Henry IV, the kings of England were wont to choose for their Confessors grave Doctors of Divinity, who had no other cure, and Bishops then attended to the care of the dioceses. Thus, Henry IV, when his Confessor was made Bishop, commanded him to go to his cure and bishopric. Henry V, likewise a very wise king and a terror to a great many kingdoms, had with him one grave Doctor of Divinity, Thomas Walden, who had no cure of souls, for his Confessor. And thus the kings and lords used to retain such for their

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22. Wood, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 222, c I.



chaplains who had no cure of souls. But in the time of Henry IV, Stafford, Bishop of Canterbury, was chancellor of England; Adam Molens, Bishop of Chichester, was keeper of the Privy Seal, and was murdered; the Bishop of Norwich, Walter Lyard, a Cornish man, was the Queen's Confessor residing at court; and the Bishop of Carlisle, and afterwards of Lincoln, Marmaduke Lumley was treasurer of England; and the unworthy Bishop of Coventry, Buth, was then chancellor to Margaret, Queen of England."<sup>23</sup> He further observes that "John Kemp, a native of Kent, Bishop of Rochester and afterwards of London, and then of York for almost twenty-eight years, while he continued Archbishop of that province, was wholly absent from his diocese, living at London or at Kent or elsewhere in England at a distance from his diocese; excepting that sometimes in ten or twelve years he resided in his diocese of York for two or three weeks, and at York a few or no days," and that the mob, when they set on Askew, Bishop of Salisbury, to murder him, thus insulted and upbraided him, "That fellow always lived with the King, and was his Confessor, and did not reside in his diocese of Salisbury with us, nor keep any hospitality, therefore, he shall not live!"<sup>24</sup>

In speaking of the holding of inferior benefices by laymen, Gascoigne says: "I know at the very time that the said doctor (Gascoigne himself) was Chancellor of Oxford, well famed for knowledge and good rule among men, that, among others unworthily promoted, a foolish youth eighteen years of age was promoted to twelve prebends and a great archdeaconry of one hundred pounds value, and to a great rectory, and a secular man received all the rents of the said benefices and spent upon the said youth just as much as he, the secular man, pleased, and never gave an account; and the said youth was the son of a simple knight, and like an idiot, almost

23. Gascoigne, *op. cit.* pars prima. p. 401, secunda, p. 450, pars prima. (p. 387).

24. Gascoigne, *ibid.* pars prima, p. 137.

every day drunk. The bishop promoted him to please a great worldly lord whose playmate he had been in his boyhood; and he remained nearly twenty years in the enjoyment of those prebends and of the archdeaconry, during which time he was never judged capable of being a priest, nor did he ever reside in any of his prebends, nor in the archdeaconry, nor in the rectory."<sup>25</sup>

Who were responsible for these abuses? Undoubtedly the evidence of history leads to one conclusion in this case, namely, that the papal court, the English court, and the English hierarchy must shoulder a great deal of the responsibility.

There are, however, a few more phases of the situation taken as a whole, that we must consider, before we can arrive at the proper perspective. Throughout this period there was practically incessant warfare. If England happened not to be at war with Scotland, she was fighting the Irish, and assuredly the French. In the reign of Edward II, we find England at war, first with the Scotch, and then with the Irish. Finally, civil war rages and Edward II loses his throne and his life. Edward III, shortly after ascending the throne, is at war with Scotland, and then in long drawn out campaigns with the French. Richard II continues the warfare in both France and Ireland, and eventually the country, in the throes of insurrection and civil war, drives Richard from his throne. He is afterward treacherously murdered. Civil strife continues and conditions remain unsettled throughout the succeeding reign. Although Henry IV was a much stronger king than his predecessor, and dealt with rebellion and insurrection very summarily and drastically, still the mysterious circumstances attendant upon his taking the throne were the source of a great deal of unrest and discontent among the people. Enemies from within and without only awaited an opportunity to begin some new disturbance. We find him

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25. Roger, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14. See also Gairdner, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 247.

at war with Scotland; another time crushing the lords appellants; putting down the Percies, and the Owen Glendower rebellion; and dealing severely and vigorously with insurrection in Yorkshire. In addition, the French under St. Pol and the Duke of Orleans continued to give trouble. Under Henry V, the mad project of subduing France was once again undertaken. This meant the cost of many lives and the burdening of the people who were already overburdened with taxation. Some idea may be had of the carnage of this almost ceaseless warfare throughout the period of which we treat, when we consider that Edward III's glorious victories were purchased with the slaughter of 50,000 men, the flower of English manhood.

War and social strife were not alone in contributing to the reign of general chaos. Famine and pestilence were undoubtedly prime factors in bringing about the social and religious disturbances that manifested themselves in the uprisings under the leadership of John Ball and the followers of John Wycliffe. Within a period of thirty-three years, England was scourged by two great epidemics, the latter of which was the greater. Following the overwhelming defeat at Bannockburn in 1314, the country was visited in 1315 by famine and pestilence. The harvest of 1314 failed, leaving the supply so scanty that the king, at the request of parliament, fixed a maximum price on provisions, but to no avail. Wheat, peas and beans sold at twenty shillings the quarter. This calamity was accompanied by disease breaking out among the cattle; the early crops were destroyed by rain and the late crops never ripened; lack of nourishment produced dysenteries and pestilence. The poor were reduced to feeding upon roots, horses, dogs and other animals. Stories of men eating the dead bodies of their companions are recorded, and of parents those of their children.<sup>26</sup> Bands of unfortunate but desperate men roamed the

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26. Walsingham 107-108; Strokel. 37; Mon. Malms. 166.

country, which presented one great theatre of rapine, anarchy and bloodshed.<sup>27</sup> Internecine war broke out among the barons, and Robert Bruce, taking advantage of the civil dissension, carried his war into England in 1318, pushing as far south as Yorkshire.

The Great Plague, known as the Black Death, followed in a few years. The first visitation lasted about fourteen months in 1348 and 1349. The exact number that died in this visitation cannot be accurately computed. It is estimated that from one-third to one-half of the population perished. We do know, however, that the exterminating malady carried off thousands, both men and beasts; agriculture was neglected; courts of justice were closed; parliament was repeatedly prorogued by proclamation; the carcasses of sheep, horses and oxen lay scattered on the fields, untouched by birds of prey. We know too that in a short time all the cemeteries in London were filled, and that Sir Walter Manny purchased a field of thirteen acres for a public burial place, and that the bodies buried there amounted to two hundred daily for several weeks. Two Archbishops of Canterbury died in this year, and the frequent appointments to vacant livings in the same year show the mortality among the clergy and their faithfulness to duty. Many of Chaucer's "Good Parson" type perished. In the diocese of Norwich, 800 parish priests died in 1349, and the diocese lost altogether 2000 clergy during the plague. Edward III speaking of the mortality throughout the country, uses the expressions, "*non modica pars populi*" and "*magna pars populi*."<sup>28</sup>

England was never to be the same England again. The far-reaching results of this terrible visitation, upon the political, social and religious institutions of the country were to affect generations yet unborn. First, it

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27. Wals. 107, 109.

28. Lingard, John, *History of England*, vol. IV: New Rym, iii, 316, 621.

led to a great social revolution. Scarcity of labour was so marked that some of the manors could not be cultivated at all; the surviving labourers took advantage of the scarcity, and as a result we find wages increasing from fifty to two hundred per cent; the land owner was brought face to face with ruin, and commodities soared in price beyond the reach of all except the wealthy. The government, alarmed at the situation, was forced to pass stringent legislation controlling the price of labour and commodities.<sup>29</sup>

A growing restlessness among the people had been evident long before the appearance of pestilence. They were the victims of the military ambitions of generations of kings. The people fought the wars, and in times of peace paid for the wars. Then, too, many of the shepherds from whom they should expect leadership and support were unworthy of their confidence. Unfortunately, the clerical estate remained aloof from the constitutional struggles of the commons, and naturally the feeling grew in some quarters that their spiritual leaders were not with them. In the midst of the confusion, this calamity of 1348 swept away in a short period the true and sympathetic leaders, the men of God who remained with their flocks. Their places could not be filled, but men had to take their places. Very often these compromises were deficient educationally and spiritually. These were fortuitous circumstances. No one can be held responsible. In all likelihood the superiors acted on the principle that half is better than none.

Just what were the results, and how comprehensive in its influence this calamity may have been, will never be known. Its effects penetrated, perhaps, avenues yet unexplored by historians. To it, as a primary influence, may be traced evils in the next two centuries which are often attributed to more proximate causes. Certainly it is not forcing a conclusion to state that the discontent,

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29. Knyght, 2599; Wals. 198; Ford. XIV, 7.

unrest and ignorance among many of the lower clergy was ideal ground for John Ball's and John Wycliffe's socialistic principles to fall upon. The fanatic reformer always takes advantage of discontent and unrest in order to obtain a hearing and a following.

We will now see something of the man Wycliffe, the most learned of the revolutionists of his day, and the soul of the revolt against the Church and the State. John Wycliffe first comes into prominence about the year 1360. The contempt manifested by his bitter invectives against the different orders of friars places the man as an extremist. This hatred and contempt increased with years, until it extended not merely to monks and friars but to all priests,<sup>30</sup> bishops and the pope himself. Charity and sincerity are the first requisites in the true reformer. No matter what his other qualifications may be, no matter what his position may be, if these virtues are absent, his denunciation and crying from the house tops are in vain. Great evils existed. It cannot be denied. The times were sorely in need of a great reformer, but John Wycliffe, from the testimony of history, cannot be said to have been that reformer. His radical principles struck at the very foundations of existing society. Certainly his memorable doctrine that ownership is founded in grace added to the general confusion. This doctrine as set forth by him states explicitly that "Everyone that is finally justified hath not only a right to, but in fact enjoys all the things of God."<sup>31</sup> In other words, a man in mortal sin was incapable of ownership, and had no right to anything, while a man in the state of grace really possessed all things. Furthermore, among Christians there ought to be community of goods; the clergy ought to live on alms freely given, and the possession of temporal goods by them was a gross abuse. Wycliffe, whether sincerely or not, but quite in the fashion of the

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30. His own poor priests excepting.

31. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 46.



typical reformer who followed him, made sure to incorporate into his teachings principles that were a bait for avaricious laymen. "If God is," he states, "temporal lords may lawfully and meritoriously take away the goods of fortune of a delinquent Church."<sup>32</sup> He continues, "Whether the Church be in such a state or not, is not my business to examine, but the business of temporal lords; who, if they find it to be in such a state, are to act boldly, and on the penalty of damnation to take away the temporalities."<sup>33</sup> Bishop Stubbs makes this observation about Wycliffe: "Wycliffe himself was a deep thinker and a popular teacher; but his logical system of politics, when it was applied to practice, turned out to be little less than socialism, and his religious system, unless its vital doctrines are understood to be thrown into the shade by its controversial tone, was unfortunately devoid of the true leaven of all religious success, sympathy and charity." Dr. Gairdner, in commenting<sup>34</sup> upon the practicability of Wycliffe's teaching, says: "It (the teaching) was clearly dangerous to an existing system, and could not maintain itself as a school of thought . . . His mode of reforming the Church was not consistent with practical politics, and the Church found her own way out of that virtual anarchy which had suggested such drastic remedies."<sup>35</sup>

Such testimony is not founded upon a prejudice against Wycliffe. It need not be a question of prejudice but of fact. Wycliffe's principles were undoubtedly socialistic and inflammatory, and above all, most inopportune. To what extent the responsibility for the insurrection of 1381, the like of which England never before had experienced, may be laid upon Wycliffe is difficult justly to compute. His principles were revolutionary beyond a doubt, and from what we glean of the man him-

32. Ibid. pp. 46-47; Vide Lechler, 425, "Trialogi Supp."

33. Lewis, Ibid. pp. 45-47.

34. Stubbs, op. cit., vol. II, p. 460.

35. Gairdner, op. cit., vol. I, p. 12.

self, he was quite capable of an extreme, inflammatory, revolutionary appeal. Other preachers, it is true, had been setting forth dangerous doctrines before the outbreak. The priest, John Ball, had been inflaming the countryside for some time. To what extent Ball was under Wycliffe's influence cannot be ascertained. We do know that Ball's doctrine about tithes harmonised with that of Wycliffe. And we know also that after the terrible happenings of 1381, when Wycliffe beheld his principles in operation, the countryside in flames and rapine and murder stalking forth, and the very social fabric trembling, he compromised, and very consistently modified his first stand, and rather paradoxically advocated another set of principles.

Was Wycliffe sincere? Let us suppose that the man was sincere, and that his bitter invectives and paradoxes were the result of his sanguine, ardent zeal. But in spite of this there remains a great deal to be explained away, a great deal of evidence that excludes him from the category of the disinterested, deeply religious reformers of every age. While there were abuses existing in religious orders, still Wycliffe's petty quibbling and inveighing did not bear the mark of fraternal correction. Moreover, there is much to be explained in his method of obtaining the wardenship of Canterbury Hall at Oxford. His method was that of a petty politician, dishonorable, and in violation of the constitutions. He yielded, finally, to the rightful appointee, after the united authority of king and pontiff had been brought to bear upon him, but with bitter resentment. His contemporaries attributed his violent attacks upon the popes and the monastic orders in after years to his bitter and lasting resentment at the loss of the wardenship. But this incident does not stand alone; even in an endeavor to be just one cannot wholly rid one's mind of the realization that there is something to be explained before Wycliffe's sincerity and integrity will be allowed to pass without qualifications. As Luther

in his association with Philip of Hesse, so John Wycliffe in his intimate friendship and association with John of Gaunt would have much to explain in an effort to dispel all suspicion. John of Gaunt was a clever unscrupulous trickster who did not hesitate at any means, no matter how immoral, to attain his end. His loyalty to both king and country is still very questionable. It was he who championed Wycliffe's cause. That Wycliffe, in his close association with this man, was wholly unaware of his character and standards of morality, that he thought him sincere, is an explanation commonly offered, but one entirely unsatisfactory, and unjust in so far as it reflects upon Wycliffe's keen intelligence.

We have endeavoured to trace the course of some of the principal causes that led up to the social and religious upheaval that manifested itself under the leadership of John Wycliffe. We have seen that the responsibility cannot be justly attributed to any one cause, or to any individual, or group of individuals, but was the outcome of forces of disintegration that had been at work in the distant past. The final outcome could be avoided only by the special interposition of Divine Providence.

Wycliffe soon attracted to himself a large following. His novel doctrines found root in the soil of discontent and soon he reaped a harvest of numbers amongst the lower and untutored clergy as well as among the laity. All were caught up with the fanatical zeal that led them boldly to denounce the adherents of the Church tradition as impious, wicked and perverse. "So strong had they become," says Dr. Gairdner, "with powerful patronage, that numbers actually accepted their teaching from fear. They created dissension among families, setting up father against son, and son against father, servants against masters, and generally speaking, neighbours against

neighbours. Such at least was the accusation against them.'<sup>36</sup>

Such were the conditions in England when the first light of reason began to dawn upon the child, the future Bishop of St. Asaph and later of Chichester. His childhood days and young manhood were spent in one of the most trying periods of England's history. It is possible that his youthful dream was to restore peace and harmony to his people, and to that Church which he loved and venerated to his last day. Later in this volume, Reginald Pecock, a master on the subject, will tell us more of John Wycliffe and Lollardy.

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36. Gairdner, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 13. Vide Chronicle of Henry Knighton (Rolls Ser.) ii, 184-187.

## CHAPTER III

## FIFTEENTH CENTURY PROSE

## AND

## LOLLARDY

The ascent and decline in the political fortunes of nations is almost mathematical in its progression. The history of great nations and great empires has no exception to offer to the invariable rule. A nation rises from obscurity, struggles upward to a pinnacle of power and prestige, relaxes in the refulgence of its own transfiguration, and in turn goes the way of all nations to take its place amongst those that have been. With the literary fortunes of a people or nation this has not been the experience of history. There is nothing regular or mathematical about the rise and fall in the literary prestige of a people. We do know, however, that a nation which loses its ideals is doomed to dark oblivion from which there is no return. A nation without ideals will never produce anything that is original, vigorous and manly in the field of art, of which literature is a part. Apart from this the possibilities for a literary future amongst a civilized people are unlimited.

Those who trace the history of literary movements have a passion for seeing in them a regular, steady progression, but unfortunately, or rather inconveniently, the few exceptions, and they are very great exceptions, greatly upset this theory of progression. No satisfactory explanation for the appearance of geniuses has yet been put forward. A literary genius may spring into existence from any civilized quarter. So also may a great literary movement. Its coming is not always foreshadowed or

heralded; they come when and whence least expected, and often they come unto their own and their own receive them not. The Anglo-Saxon lyric and epic, Deor's Complaint, Beowulf, and the poems of Caedmon and Cynewulf arose from the unknown past; the thirteenth century romance was not a result, but came out of that period of blight and death following the Norman Conquest; Shakespeare's unsurpassed genius blossomed on the mediocrities that succeeded to the genius of Chaucer. There is, in truth, a tide in the fortunes of literature, but a tide ungoverned by invariable laws.

In turning to prose we must be prepared to modify our view on the theory of the progression. The theory, like all theory, lends itself to the abuse of exaggeration, but in prose it has some foundation in experience. Some may see a development from King Alfred to our own day. We are not prepared to grant such comprehensive concessions, but one must admit that there is, in the history of English prose, a slower, steadier and more continuous development than in poetry, since in the latter there is greater freedom and less hampering by predominant forms and tastes of the age. The literary genius is primarily an artist, and naturally seeks the most perfect medium of expression for his intellectual and emotional experience. This medium is poetry with its charm of expression, and harmony of rhythm, in which the caprice of genius is poured forth impulsively rather than under the dominance of any laws of progression; while, on the other hand, prose, the medium of expression for exact thinking and exact description, is more dependent upon and determined by the exigencies of form and taste of the age. The atmosphere of chivalry in the thirteenth and early part of the fourteenth centuries was not an atmosphere for didactics and polemics but rather an atmosphere of green woodlands, sparkling brooks, old castles, fair ladies, champing steeds and warrior knights.



The thirteenth century romance supplied this demand. Didactics and polemics came into their own shortly after this, when Wycliffe initiated the movement against the Church. Both sides of the controversy felt the need of exact and vigorous expression. In this period, this age of Wycliffe and Peckock, English prose received an impetus that has come down to us. Later, in the sixteenth century when men felt so keenly, yes bitterly, about religious and political matters, we find English prose under Fisher, More, Latimer and Thomas Elliot, and finally under Tyndal, reaching one of the highest pinnacles of development in its history. Finally in the nineteenth century, the age that sees the Romantic revival, the age of great political and religious controversy, the age of the Novel, the form of exact expression and exact description, we find English prose in its golden age.

Let us return to fifteenth century prose. Until quite towards the close of the fourteenth century, England can hardly be said to have possessed any prose literature not avowedly or practically of a didactic character. "To save some one's soul or to improve some one's morals were seemingly the only motives which could suffice to persuade an Englishman to write his native language except in verse."<sup>1</sup> It is a commonplace to remark that the greatest work in the field of English literature even up to the middle of the fifteenth century was executed in verse. We have already observed that the impulse to prose writing began in earnest with the period of Wycliffe's attack.

The fifteenth century is one of the most difficult periods to understand. The sources of its history are often obscure, and for the most part fragmentary. Moreover, in the presence of all the confusion arising from political struggles, wars, pestilence, famine and religious

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1. Pollard, Alf. W., *Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*, p. XIX.  
*Fifteenth Century Prose and Verse*.

strife, we are apt to pass over this period in the conventional fashion with the summary remark that all was confusion and darkness, transitory and mediocre. In the development of constitutional institutions of the period, this is, according to Professor Tout, a serious exaggeration. It is also an exaggeration to state that all was decline in the literary world. Dr. Gairdner very aptly remarks, "We are apt to transfer to the age itself the difficulties which we encounter, forgetting that the forces which were to produce the Renaissance were already at work and indeed beginning to bear fruit."<sup>2</sup>

No transition period in English literature has been more attacked and maltreated than this. In their attempts to throw greater lustre upon the Elizabethan outburst of original work, literary historians of the old school were accustomed to place the English Mandeville nearly half a century too early; they ignored or very summarily passed over very worthy attempts at dramatic production in this period, reserving their attention and their praise for the middle of the sixteenth century. It was also their wont to attribute to the sixteenth century, as a special characteristic, the industry of translators, when, really, men had been earnestly pioneering in this field at least as early as 1380.<sup>3</sup>

There has been a disappointment arising from the achievements of fifteenth century literary endeavours, a disappointment from expectation not well founded, and from a lack of the proper understanding of the great fermentation that was taking place not merely in matters political and religious, but even in the literary world. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were closed volumes, they were past history. Their ideals and aspirations and viewpoint were those of a truly great people, but these all passed with them. It was a new people with

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2. Gairdner, *Paston Letters* 1, 318.

3. Ten Brink *History of English Literature*, ed. W. Clarke Robinson, vol. II and L. Dora Schmitz, vol. III.

a different viewpoint who were to succeed. This new era was to be "the century of the commons," and this "century of the commons" was to imprint itself on every phase of the life of the people. Certainly, there is great disappointment in comparing Hoccleve and Lydgate with Chaucer; Chaucer is the exception, however. The progression theorists naturally would expect something from the promise of the great thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. With Chaucer as the height of these centuries' attainment what could they not expect, according to their own theories, in the century that followed?

A retracing of steps was absolutely necessary, and this is especially true as regards prose. It is this retracing of steps, or better marking time, that is looked upon as decline. In fact, it is the first healthy advance taken. Without it a strong, healthy, vigorous English prose would never have been possible. Latin and French had to be driven from the domination of English letters. They were the foreign domination in the literary sphere, and as long as they held sway the native tongue remained inert and declined. Henry V's victories in France and the first displacement of French or Latin by English as the official medium of correspondence were not mere coincidences; it was the new spirit asserting itself. The language of the common people was coming to its own in "the century of the commons."

There was a general demand for education in this age. To be able to read and to write was no longer a distinction and rare privilege of the upper class. The Paston Letters give testimony of this fact. Dr. Gairdner says: "From the extreme scarcity of original letters of such an early date we are too easily led to undervalue the culture and civilization of the age. But the standard of education was by no means so low, and its advantages by no means so exceptionally distributed as might be

otherwise supposed."<sup>4</sup> Above the class of ordinary labourer, no one seems to have been wholly illiterate. All could write and most persons could express themselves in writing with fluency and ease. The nobility were the worst writers, and Dr. Gairdner observes that their spelling and handwriting alike were outrageous. William Bingham draws an extreme picture in his lamentation over the condition of the grammar schools of the period. William Bingham, it must be borne in mind, was one of the old school who saw decline in the fact that native English was beginning to supplant Latin as the principal medium of communication. He says: "The grammar schools which used to be flourishing and numerous, had decayed for want of masters, and that the faculty of grammar was much neglected both in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and in the country generally, whereby not merely was the knowledge of sacred scripture and Latin requisite for the pursuit of the law, and the affairs of the realm likely to perish, but also the power of communicating with foreigners."<sup>5</sup> Moved by these considerations Bingham founded Clare Hall at Cambridge. His testimony, however, is rather a proof that real progress was being made in the use of the English language.

French was also giving way. In the reign of Henry V the fact that Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, could speak French fluently was regarded as something of an accomplishment.<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Latin or Anglo-French was the usual medium of expression for letters or semi-official documents: but before the middle of the century, men of public affairs, politicians and statesmen, regularly made use of their native language in their correspondence. Latin or French was still the language of diplomacy. However, Charles

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4. Gairdner Paston Letters 1, 318.

5. Cal. Patent Rolls. Hen. VI, III, 295.

6. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in 15th Century*, p. 195.

the Bold writes with his own hand in English to the governor of Calais.<sup>7</sup>

The demand for education was not confined to the upper classes. Since Agincourt, in 1415, and Calais, in 1436, a great wave of patriotism had swept over the country, and men felt the pressing need of being able to express themselves clearly in their native English. In 1445 four grammar schools were founded in London, where there were already a number of similar institutions.<sup>8</sup> Under Henry V, education made marked progress. The scholar and man of letters found in him a patron, not a mere dilettante, but a fond reader of goodly tales and works on hunting and even chronicles and works of theology. It was his brother, however, the "good" Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, in whom the scholar found a patron and a great advocate of the new learning in England. His library at the University of Oxford still proclaims to the world his scholarly interest in books and in men of letters. He did a great work for the revival of letters in England in establishing a connection between the representatives of the continental Renaissance and the patrons of the revival in England. He carried on a personal correspondence with Italian humanists like Leonardo Bruni and Pier Candido Decembri. It was said of him by the University of Oxford, that under his patronage Greek was coming to life.<sup>9</sup>

The zeal for learning was not confined to the noble efforts of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester. It was Walter, Lord Hungerford, who encouraged the pseudo-Elinham to write his "Life of Henry V."<sup>10</sup> James Butler, fourth Earl of Ormonde, had in his service scholars like James Young, who englished the "Secreta Secretorum." The

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7. Kirk, *Charles the Bold*, ii, 70.

8. Leach, *Educational Charters*, pp. XXXVII and XXXVIII. Also Kingsford, *ibid.*, p. 195, sq.

9. *Epistolae Academicæ*, p. 203.

10. Preface of All Souls M. S.

Earls of Warwick and Salisbury gave freely of their patronage to Lydgate, and Cardinal Beaufort assisted Hardyng. Adam Moleyns, Thomas Bekynton, and John Somerset, men of scholarly tastes, were friendly to scholars. They kept up a friendship with the men of letters in England and in Italy. Moreover, young men like William Grey, John Phreas or Free and John Gunthorpe, scholars of Balliol College, went to Italy to study under Guarini at Ferrara.<sup>11</sup> William Sellyng, a fellow of All Souls, and afterwards prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, made more than one visit to Italy, and collected Latin and Greek MSS. Certainly, as Kingsford remarks, that learning cannot have been altogether dead, which gave his succession of scholars their first training. Another succession of scholars is to be seen in Thomas Bekynton, William Waynflete, John Morton, and John Russell, who were trained at Oxford for the service of the state. These men in the midst of their other duties still retained their scholarly tastes. Anthony Woodville was a nobleman of culture, and, like Tiptaft, translated into English, works which Caxton printed.

We have seen something of the growing interest in education and in English letters, as evinced by the moral and material support given it from every quarter. We shall now see to what extent this new enthusiasm expressed itself in actual results. John of Trevisa, Vicar of Berkley, while appearing earlier than the period which we are treating, really belongs to the movement. His great work, which was supposed to have been finished in 1387, was his translation of Higden's Polychronicon. It is an interesting specimen of the earliest English prose. In addition to this, two other translations, one of "Vegetius" and the other of "Aegidius Romanus," are attributed to him. According to Caxton, and it is a mere supposition, he was supposed to have translated the Bible.

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11. Kingsford, *ibid.*, p. 6.



But Trevisa's really great contribution to English prose was to prepare the way for others to follow along more original lines.

The unqualified statement that the period was mediocre and barren, is indeed misleading. We must not make the mistake of passing over, with a conventional observation, the important and vital work that must be accomplished with yeoman plodding and industry in any initial stage of development if the final results are to be crowned with the glories of the blossoming period. Unfortunately, too, often the blossoming period receives more than a just due of the harvest of praise and recognition. What we have seen of the results of the period, and more important still, what has been destroyed in the succeeding generations during the pillaging and firing of monasteries, is sufficient to convince us that the English world was anything but lacking in intellectual and literary interests.

We find the monks at work in their copying rooms, and the rich abbeys not only turning out good books but laying the foundations for the literary medium of history as is seen from the sequence of chronicles produced in the Abbey of St. Albans.<sup>12</sup> The work of one monk, John Capgrave (b. Apr. 21, 1393, d. Aug. 12, 1464), a priest of the order of Austin Friars is, even in its extensiveness, phenomenal. At one time he was provincial of the order in England, but a greater and more lasting distinction is his because of his scholarly attainments. He wrote in both Latin and English. Amongst his works in Latin are his "Chronicle of England," "Book of the Noble Henries," his commentaries on the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth and the Books of Kings. His other commentaries are on the Psalter, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Daniel and the Twelve Minor Prophets; on the Epistles of St. Paul; on the Canonical Epistles, the Acts, and Apoca-

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12. Ten Brink, *op. cit.*, vol. III, pp. 16-21.

lypse. He also contributed works on the Creeds; also a "Manual of Christian Doctrine"; "Theological Conclusions"; "Sermons for a Year"; "Scholastic Lectures"; "Ordinary Disputations"; "Addresses to the Clergy on the Sentences of Peter Lombard"; "On the Followers of St. Augustine"; "Of Illustrious Men of the Order of St. Augustine"; "The Life of St. Augustine"; the "Life of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester." In English he wrote the "Life of St. Gilbert of Sempringham," the only manuscript of which was destroyed by fire in 1731. He also contributed in English rhyme "The Life of St. Katherine" three manuscripts of which still remain. Certainly, in the presence of available evidence the charge of slothfulness can not be sustained, nor can it be said that literary interests were confined to the exceptional few, and that industry in this field is to be found only with such men as Wycliffe and Pecock.

Another interesting phase in the development of prose in this period is to be seen in the contemporary chronicles. The English Chronicles of London begin to take shape. In 1430 a full version was probably compiled. From this, two versions appeared; one in 1431, and the other in the following year. The importance of these versions is seen from this, that historical prose was beginning to take on distinctive characteristics, literary qualities in advance of the traditional methods used in the monasteries. The deep, growing interest in these productions is another healthy manifestation; within three years three distinct versions were in demand. This interest was concomitant with the wave of patriotism which was sweeping the country. The chronicles assuredly give evidence of the awakening of this vigorous national feeling. The main narrative of "The Great English Chronicle of the Brut" is a rehandling of the material contained in the London Chronicles; but the significant characteristic is this, that the writers make

use of such sources as ballads and popular poems as in the case of Agincourt, the siege of Rouen, and the defence of Calais. We find ourselves in the presence of a marked stage of continuous, progressive development. The literary achievement may not be of a high order, still it is a step forward and promising, springing from the commercial classes.<sup>13</sup>

Trevisa's translations do not stand alone in this period. Occasionally instances are met where works in verse form are turned into prose, as is the case of one of the versions of the "Life of Adam and Eve." Later in the fifteenth century a number of the "Lives of the Saints" were translated from Latin into English prose. Legends of the Blessed Virgin were also written in prose. An English priest compiled for a noble lady, his penitent, a life of St. Jerome from the "Legenda Aurea" and from correspondence between St. Augustine and St. Cyril. The purpose of the work was, that the noble lady and others might learn therefrom how to live and how to die. A monk, probably of the northeast Midlands, translated, at the request of his prior, the legends of four female saints from Latin into the vernacular.

There were also the prose-legends that began to appear at an early date, especially in Western England. These writings were primarily for the religious instruction of the people, and also to assist the clergy in their preaching. John Myre, a canon regular of the Augustinians at Lilleshall in Shropshire, was the author of the first of these. From a Latin source he produced in rhymed-couplets, "Instructions for Parish Priests."<sup>14</sup> This he afterwards brought out in prose. Another of his set of sermons is the "Liber Festivalis" or the "Festial," written about the beginning of the fifteenth century. The source of this was the "Golden Legend,"

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13. Kingsford, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

14. Pub. by Early Eng. Text Society.

which he used very freely. He does not make use of as many legends as did Jacobus of Genoa, although he added several new ones such as that of St. Alkmund, patron saint of Lilleshall church, and that of St. Wenefrede of Wales. Later, in 1438, the "*Legenda Aurea*" was translated again by an anonymous individual who signed himself a "pore sinner." This translation was made from one of the existing French versions.

Another author, a contemporary of John Myrc, also left many sermons which are preserved in libraries and museums. This was John Felton, vicar of St. Mary Magdalen, and Fellow of Mary Magdalen College, Oxford. His course of Sunday sermons, some fifty-eight in number, was much used by his successors in preaching. He tells us in his preface that he purposed to draw up the course of sermons founded on the Gospels of the Sundays, in order to assist priests in instructing the faithful and also to assist students of moral and dogmatic theology who were poor and could not buy books.<sup>15</sup>

A work that was very popular, not merely in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but even as late as the seventeenth, when it was again circulated in manuscript, and may have suggested to Bunyan his "*Pilgrim's Progress*," was that of a French monk, Guillaume de Deguileville. Deguileville, a Cistercian of the Abbey of Chalis in the diocese of Senlis, wrote his "*Pélérinage de la Vie Humaine*" sometime between 1330 and 1331. This was followed by his "*Pélérinage de L'Ame Humaine*." In 1358 he produced the "*Pélérinage de Jesu Christ*." He himself admits that he was largely under the influence of the great work, the "*Roman de la Rose*." Jean Gallopes, a French priest of English extraction, translated the first two "*Pélérinages*" into English prose, sometime in the fifteenth century before 1435, about the same time that the original text of the "*Pélérinage de la*

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15. Harl MS. 861, fol. 2. *Sermones Dominicales* were pub. 1431.

Vie Humaine" was translated into the prose of the South-English dialect, and another version was produced at a later date in the Northern dialect.

There is one work of the first half of the fifteenth century which for maturity and ease, and freedom of expression, stands next to the productions of Reginald Pecock. Long before Caxton printed it in 1490, it had influenced a dramatic poet. The author of the moral play "Spirit, Will and Understanding" is indebted to "The Sevene Payntes" for his theological learning. "The Sevene Payntes" is an adaptation from the German, "*Büchlein der Weisheit*," the work of a German Dominican. The work was very popular in the Middle Ages, and in Germany is said to have had a wider circulation than the "*De Imitatione Christi*."<sup>16</sup>

A striking characteristic of the literary works of this period is their great dependence upon foreign sources in matter and literary form. The principal literary treasures were in Latin and French, a considerable part of the latter consisting of translations from the former. At this period of development the French were just one stage in advance of that in England. English insularity in more ways than one, and the French proximity to the centre of the revival in Italy, account for this. This must be said, however, that while the English prose translations of the period are, for the most part, imitative, still there is with each successive attempt a personal and original recasting, a fuller development, particularly in the power of description, and epic qualities. An English prose rendering of one of the earliest English romances is the history of King Ponthus of Galicia and the beautiful Sidogne, daughter of the King of Little Bretagne. This is based on a prose version in the French. Another important translation, made in the reign of Henry VI, was that of the veritable literary treasure

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16. Ten Brink Eng. Lit. ed. Dr. Aleis Brandl, vol. II, pt. II, p. 7.

house, the "Roman de Merlin." The author, Robert de Boron, a Frenchman, produced the original at the beginning of the thirteenth century, bringing the narrative up to the crowning of Arthur. Later the work is supplemented with the additional history of the King and his knights to the coming of Lancelot to the court. It is this fuller version of the "Roman de Merlin" which was translated into English prose.

Before concluding our sketch of the prose of the period we feel that a few observations upon another most important phase of English prose development are necessary. It was at this time that political prose, began to give signs of reawakening. Previous to this there was the already mentioned "Aegidius Romanus," "The Mirror of Princes," and in addition attempts had been made in handling such themes as the "Commodityes of England." With the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses, a champion of the Lancastrian cause arose in the person of Sir John Fortescue, the first great writer on political subjects. In the midst of the struggle, the heat of religious controversy abated temporarily, and men became allied in the two hostile camps, according to their political sympathies. Fortescue, in his enthusiasm for his espoused views, gave expression to them in both Latin and his native English. In many respects his coming forth resembles that of Pecoek. He came a zealous champion with a keen intelligence and a virile gift of expression, standing next to Pecoek as a representative of the period. He was another man of the hour, whose literary career had its origin in the necessity of the times rather than being pursued as an end in itself. His first efforts were a series of political pamphlets written partly in Latin and partly in English. But the work upon which his literary reputation is chiefly founded is his treatise "On the Governace of England," or "Difference between Absolute and limited Monarchy." Throughout the treatise a



keen, penetrating, religious mind is revealed. In these respects he strikingly resembles a great prose writer of a somewhat later date, Sir Thomas More.

Among the various factors that influenced fifteenth century literature, leaving upon it an enduring character, John Wycliffe and the English Bible stand eminently in relief. No study of the prose of the period would be complete without a reference to them. Whatever divergent opinions may be held of Wycliffe's sincerity and zeal, or of Wycliffe as a religious reformer, this is certain: He stands alone as a literary figure in his own age. Very few writers in the history of English literature, and especially in the history of prose development, have given such an impetus to the language. His influence is both direct and indirect; direct in his own contributions, and indirect insofar as he wielded a power over his own followers and also upon others of his age. The influence which he exerted indirectly was far greater, perhaps, than that arising from his own personal literary contributions. That his controversy and attack upon the church, which was taken up by his followers, gave a character and a coloring to the writing of the period is undeniable. When men feel keenly they give vent to their emotional experience through some medium of expression, as marble, colour or harmony, or even language. This intellectual together with emotional experience when conformed to language may be said to comprise the art of literature. At this particular time in history men did feel keenly on matters of religious controversy. Wycliffe led in the movement; he was the intellectual of the faction, whose fire and zeal inflamed every individual of his followers.

The religious movement led to great efforts in a literary way. Pamphlets and tracts and treatises poured forth, and in turn men like Pecock thrust themselves into the heat of the controversy in defence of orthodoxy. The times give evidence of great efforts being made on both

sides; Wycliffe's works are voluminous, while the list of the non-extant works alone, with which Pecoek met the attack, give some idea of the enthusiasm with which men entered the contest. The opponents in the controversy seem to have read the signs of the time, since both parties were thoroughly awakened to the growing enthusiasm for the revival of knowledge and especially to the enthusiasm for the native language. At a glance it can be seen what effect this would have upon the vernacular literature. What would naturally be expected did actually happen. Men delved into every available source whence they could draw power for their weapons of attack and defense; into the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, into legends and chronicles, into the ancient philosophers and theologians and particularly into the Scriptures.<sup>17</sup>

No other one book has impressed itself upon English literature as have the Sacred Scriptures. To the English language it has been a great reservoir to which the language of successive generations has returned for new life and pristine purity. Literature is indebted to Wycliffe, although it is evident in the light of renewed research, that his work in the matter of translating the Bible has been greatly exaggerated. One must not forget that the movement to popularize the vernacular text had a great influence upon the future literary history of the country. That the same results would have eventually come about we have no doubt; still, one cannot dissociate Wycliffe from the popularization of the Scriptures and from the movement that accomplished it at an earlier date than would otherwise have been done.

That the popularization of the Sacred Text would have eventually been accomplished seems certain, since, contrary to a prevailing false view, there is nothing in

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17. See list at end of Babington's edit. of the *Repressor*. It manifests an extensive reading experience in Pecoek.

the teaching or attitude of the Catholic Church that would have frustrated it. This is quite evident from the fragmentary portions of the vernacular Scriptures still extant in various museums, libraries and monasteries. In England during Anglo-Saxon times we find Caedmon<sup>18</sup> giving several passages of Scripture. Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborn (d. 709), is reported to have rendered the Psalter into his native language.<sup>19</sup> Venerable Bede (d. 735), rendered the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and the Gospel of St. John into Anglo-Saxon.<sup>20</sup> Also to the period of Aldhelm may be ascribed the Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospels.<sup>21</sup>

Up to the age of Wycliffe there was no great need for a version of the Scriptures in English. French was actually the language of the court and of the educated classes until after the middle of the fourteenth century. After the Norman Conquest, whilst the wants of the educated classes were satisfied by the Norman-French translations, the Anglo-Saxon version of the Gospels was copied as late as the 12th century.<sup>22</sup> There is a very interesting collection of vernacular versions of the Scriptures in the British Museum.<sup>23</sup> There are Bohemian, Dutch and Italian, the dates of publication of which range from 1466-1532.<sup>24</sup> Certainly the idea of giving the Sacred Writings to the people did not originate with Wycliffe nor with Luther, nor with any of their contemporaries and colleagues.

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18. Caedmon was a monk of Whitby in 7th century.

19. Bale *Scriptorum illus. catalogus* ed. 1557, p. 84.

20. Bede, ep. ad. Egbertum, see Hist. Eccl. ed. Smith Cantab. 1722, p. 306.

See also, Bodl. Rushworth 3946 (a MS. of the Bodl. Lib.) also another gloss in the famous Bk. of Durham Brit. Mus. Cotton. Nero D4.

21. Archp. Parker pub. in 1571; Dr. Marshall, rector of Lincoln College, in 1665; Mr. Benj. Thorpe, in 1842. See also by Sir John Spelman, entitled "*Psalterium Davidis Latino Saxonice Vetus* 4 Lond. 1640.

22. E. M. Thompson, Wycliffe Exhibition (Brit. Mus.), p. XVII.

23. See Catalogue of 1892.

24. Gasquet, *The Old Eng. Bible and Other Essays*, p. 102; and also Melbourne 1896, *The Church and the Bible*.

Wycliffe's actual work in translating the Bible has, as we have observed, been greatly exaggerated. Sir E. Maunde Thompson, principal librarian of the British Museum, makes this comment: "It is not surprising that much has been ascribed to him which is due to writers whose names have died." He goes on to say: "The Commentary on the Apocalypse, which probably dates from the middle of the fourteenth century, and those on the Gospels of Sts. Matthew, Luke and John were all believed to be the works of his pen, although recent criticism has rejected his claim to the authorship."<sup>25</sup> The same author observes further that the New Testament can be said probably to be due, "to the hand of Wycliffe himself." Of the second or revised version of the whole Scriptures, he says: "Wycliffe himself, who, above others, would be conscious of defects, may have commenced the work of revision. He did not however live to see it accomplished."<sup>26</sup> The silence of his contemporaries and particularly of his great adversaries is significant. Of all those who wrote so voluminously and exhaustively on his errors only one makes mention of any connection between him and Scriptural translations.

Finally, the last word, as far as the evidence is available on the Wycliffe authorship, has been said by Messrs. Forshall and Madden in their introduction to the edition of the Wycliffe Scriptures. They have compiled whatever evidence is at hand. Although their argument is not final, still they are at one with Sir E. Maunde Thompson in the conclusion that only the Gospels can with any probability be ascribed to John Wycliffe.<sup>27</sup>

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25. Wycliffe Exhibition (Brit. Mus.), p. XVII.

26. Wycliffe Exhibition (Brit. Mus.).

27. Forshall and Madden "Introduction to ed. of the Wycliffe Script."

## CHAPTER IV

## PECOCK'S REPRESSOR AND LOLLARDY

In the two preceding chapters we have attempted: first, to trace the origin and development of the various factors that resulted finally in the social and religious conditions that necessitated, in the opinion of the Bishop of Chichester, the bringing forth of his principal work; and secondly, to trace those forces at work in English prose development that were to contribute to the greatest English prose writing of the fifteenth century, namely *Pecock's Repressor*. In this chapter we purpose to make a study of this principal literary production.

Before proceeding to a review of *Pecock's Repressor*, we will attempt a better understanding of the author himself. In fact this is essential for the proper grasp of the work itself. His was rather a unique position, that of a fifteenth century bishop whose one ambition was to reconcile the heretic to the Church, but who in turn was himself called upon to answer to the charge of heresy.

It does not fall within the scope of this present treatise to treat in a conclusive manner the theological views of the author. Our present object is literary rather than theological. Nor is it our purpose to exonerate Pecock from the charge of heresy. Undoubtedly there is evidence for certain of the charges made against him, but it is difficult to reconcile the majority of them with the actual facts set forth in his writings. To him the Church was that divinely constituted body, the visible head of which is the Bishop of Rome in virtue of the fact that he is the successor of Peter, upon whom Jesus Christ Himself founded this Church. No contemporary prelate in England had greater esteem for the Papacy than had Reginald Pecock. In an age when abuses arose from the

manner of appointing to benefices, and thoroughly orthodox bishops protested the exercise of papal power, not in matters spiritual, but in temporal affairs, the author of the *Repressor* stood out amongst his fellow bishops in defense of the most extreme claims. "Holy Writt of the Newe Testament," says Pecock, "makith mensioun, Johun firste chapiter, that Crist seide to Symount Petir thus, 'Thou art Symount the sone of Johanna, thou shalt be clepid Cephas,' or heed; and thanne Johun settith to this 'which is interpretid, Petir' and bigynnyng, and 1<sup>e</sup> Cor. xv<sup>e</sup> 4-c in the bigynnyng and Galat. toward the myddis, Poul clepid Petir Cephas . . . thanne her vpon y argue thus: Petir was heed in the maner in which noon of the othere Apostolis was heed: for ellis cause hadde he noon good whi Crist schulde have seid so singulerli to him and not othere thus: Thou shalt be callid heed; and herwith it is trewe, that no thing is an heed but of sum certeyn bodi; wherefore of sum bodi Petir was heed, of which bodi noon of the othere apostolis was heed, etc."<sup>1</sup>

Granting that Pecock was a heretic, certain qualifications must be made in order to understand the man and his work. Undoubtedly it would have greatly grieved this unique defender of orthodoxy to have been classified with Wycliffe and the various heresiarchs that preceded him, or with Luther and the numerous founders that succeeded him. Those who see in the Bishop of Chichester a forerunner of the fomenters of sixteenth century dissensions, or even of the modern rationalist, have not a comprehensive understanding of his mental and religious attitude towards the traditional authority and teachings of the Catholic Church. His final act of submission even to a local tribunal was not inconsistent, as some maintain, but quite consistent with the principles which he enunciated. He did indeed wander off on tangents and touch upon matters rather speculative and

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1. *Repressor*. Pt. IV, ch. 4.



premature, but his procedure was neither singular nor unprecedented. He was thoroughly aware that a very wide latitude was allowed in the field of speculation. None knew better than he what really constituted heresy or a heretic. A man is a heretic, according to Pecock, "Whanne he trowith a falshede contrarie to any article of the feith or to eny conclusioun folewing out of an article of feith, and he wold obstynatly cleve to thilk fals trowing and wole not leve it for eny sufficient schewing which is maad to hym that his trowing is fals."<sup>2</sup>

In the end of the prologue to his *Reule of Crysten Religioun* our author very clearly sets forth this attitude of which we have already spoken. It seems plain that this should be kept before the reader who would attempt to understand either Pecock or his writings. He assures us that it is far from his intention to defend in his writings any error or heresy, i. e. "eny conclusioun which is azens treuthe, and specially azens the feeth or Law of oure Lord God (or ageyns the determynacioun of Goddis Churche here in erthe)<sup>3</sup> and if eny such it happe me to write, or offre or purpose holde defende or favoure bi eny vnavisidnesse, hastynes or ignoraunce eer than y may se the treuthe or bi eny other maner, y schal be redy it to leeve, forseake and retrete mekely and devoutly at the assignementis of myn ordynaries fadris of the Chirche, after that thei han take sufficient airsying there-upon. Yhe, and if the same y now as far thanne forsake and leeve. In the contrarie maner to this gouverance y was never zit hiderto disposid, y thanke my Lord God; and y purpose never in contrarie wise to be, however it happe ouer hastie and undiscreeete awaiters and back-biters, in other wise of me feele or diffame."

This statement is of the greatest importance to the proper understanding of Pecock. There is no ambiguity.

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2. Pecock's, *The Reule of Crysten Relig.*, Chap. XIII.

3. Interlined in a different hand, by a friend and perhaps at request of Pecock. We know that Pecock attempted a hurried revision of his works when the storm burst about him.

The terminology is precise, the reasoning clear and exhaustive. It is the reply to a challenge, and a reply of one fully conscious of the nature of the challenge and the inimical designs of an unsympathetic faction. There is no statement in his writings more characteristic of Pecoek. It is sincere, and sincerity was one of his great virtues. This virtue, or rather the weakness which often accompanies it, namely rashness, later had much to do in bringing about his downfall. When in the complete effulgence of his noonday glory, the unsuspected quake shook the foundations beneath him; when the real significance and seriousness of his plight were thrust in upon him, he very consistently spoke and acted upon the principles enunciated in this statement. There were amongst his writings certain doctrines that could be taken as dangerous, but far from his intention was it to expound or disseminate erroneous opinions. Many of his works had been written for private circulation and had gotten abroad before being revised. He did not wish, therefore, to be responsible for any work written prior to the year 1454. Pecoek very explicitly admits in this pronouncement the possibility of error in his writings, but it is far from his intention to sponsor such errors.

The prologue to *The Book of Faith* sheds additional light upon the authors attitude towards the church, and must not be overlooked in a study of the author. Here Pecoek sets forth the expedient to which he has had recourse in treating controversial matters. In his experience he finds people throughout England, who in their disobedience, with peril to their souls, tenaciously cling to the authority of private interpretation of Scripture. He desires most ardently to win back these wayward ones to the truth. To speak to them of the authority of the clergy and the infallibility of the Church is to draw from them naught but laughter. He purposes therefore to approach them with arguments from reason, namely: although a teacher may fail, we ought to

believe him in so far as it is not known that he has failed. He says in part "Whereto therefore schulde the clergie leene oonly to thilke meene anentis lay men, whiche lay men wole not admitte. Bettir it were to seche affir another meene. Wherefore y, unworthiest and yongist and louyest of prelatis, aspiying this mischeef ayens which y have not knowe eny remedie yitt hiderto therayens writen, and desiring forto wyne the lay children of the chirche into obedience, whiche undir greet perel of ther soulis, thei owen paie and holde to the clergie, entende and purpos in this present book forto mete ayens such unobediencers bi another way, and in another maner, and bi meene which the lay persoonys wole admitte and graunte; which meene is this, that we owen to bileeve and stonde to sum seier or techer which may faile, while it is not knowe that thilk seier or techer theryne failith."<sup>4</sup>

The very few who, from Peacock's day, have assisted in placing this greatest of mid-fifteenth century prose writers in his merited niche of dignity, for various reasons have either ignored or failed to grasp the most important phase of his character, namely, his zeal for orthodoxy. With these observations before us we will pass to the review of Peacock's literary achievements.

His greatest work was "The Repressing of over myche wyting of the Clergie" or "The Repressor of over myche blamyng the Clergie" or as it is commonly known *The Repressor*. The reasons for undertaking the work are given in the prologue. For many years accusations have been made against the Church by the lay party (the Lollards). The attack is not merely upon a group of clergy, but upon the clergy of the whole world. The critics have not restricted themselves to abuses; they have attacked even the teachings and practices of the Church. Moreover these "blamers" can not

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4. Morison, *Peacock's Book of Faith*, p. 113, 1908.

“shewe,” “teche” and “proue,” that these teachings and practices are “defautis and synnes,” but succeed only in stirring up rancours, disturbances, schism and other evils amongst the people. Such faultfinders should recall the advice of St. Paul to St. Timothy, when he says, “Vndirmyne thou, biseche thou, and blame thou in al pacience and doctrine” ( ); or the words of St. Luke, “O leche, heale thi silf.”

Abuses, however, do exist amongst the clergy, and it is not his desire to condone such. His purpose is to win the lay party from their policy of criticism, the source of which is ignorance of the teachings of the Church. To this end he intends to expound eleven articles and defend them against the attack of the Lollards. These eleven articles are: (1) the use of images; (2) pilgrimages; (3) the holding of landed possessions by the clergy; (4) the various ranks of the hierarchy; (5) the framing of ecclesiastical laws and ordinances by papal and episcopal authority; (6) the institution of the religious; (7) the invocation of saints; (8) the costliness of ecclesiastical decorations; (9) the ceremonies of the mass and the sacraments, generally; (10) the taking of oaths; (11) the maintaining of war and capital punishment to be lawful.

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

The work is divided into five parts. In the first part the author refrains from attacking the eleven objections directly, but strikes at errors more fundamental. The aberrations of the Lollards are the result of three principal erroneous opinions. If these opinions are shown to be false, all their other tenets will collapse; “if it be sufficientli proued that tho thre ben nought and vntrewe opiniouns and holdingis bildid upon hem fal and lacke it wherebi thei mighten in eny colour or semyng be

mented, holde, and supportid.”<sup>5</sup> The first of these errors is this. No Christian is to hold an ordinance a law of God unless it is grounded in Scripture. As a result, whenever a clerk affirms any ordinance which is beyond their knowledge or contrary to their liking, even if it is reasonable and therefore in conformity with “moral lawe of kinde,” (natural law) they demand: “Where groundist thou it in the Newe Testament?” or, “Where groundist thou it in Holy Scripture in such place which is not bi the Newe Testament reoukid.”<sup>6</sup>

The second of these errors is, that every Christian man or woman, truly meek and humble and willing to understand the Scriptures, shall infallibly come to their meaning, even to the understanding of the “Apocalips.”

The third opinion is, whenever such a Christian discovers the true sense of Scripture after the aforesaid manner, he must not listen to any reasoning or arguing to the contrary on the part of a clerk.

## CHAPTER II AND III

Thirteen principal conclusions are set forth against the first error. Before undertaking the refutation, Pecock feels that a clearer understanding of his terminology, and a short discourse on certain of the rules of logic, will be of use to the lay party. The present errors of the Lollards are due to their lack of logic. If only they were better schooled in this science, it would be a great safeguard against error and would be a means of drawing them out of their present errors.

The first of the thirteen conclusions is this: It is not the office of Holy Scripture to found any law of God, to the knowledge of which man can attain by means of his natural reasons—“It longith not to Holy Scripture, neither it is his office into which God hath him ordeyned, neither it is his part forto ground eny gouernaunce or

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5. Pec. Repress., Chap. I.

6. Ibid. Ch. I.

deede or seruice of God, or eny law of God, or eny trouthe which mannis reasoun bi nature may fynde, leerne, and knowe."

In proof of this conclusion he states that whatever God ordains to be a ground or fundament of any truth, it must so fully set it forth that the given truth can not be wholly known without this ground or fundament. But Holy Scripture alone does not wholly set forth a truth or ordinance together with all the knowledge necessary to be had upon it, to which man can attain by the use of his reason alone. Therefore no truth to which man can come by reason alone, is founded in Holy Scripture.

The first premise of this argument must be granted, says Pecock. He then sets forth his reasons for this.

The second premise he undertakes to prove as follows: Whatever reason does as fully and perfectly as Holy Scripture, it does, and Holy Scripture alone does not do it. For in the truths attainable by man's reason alone, whatever knowledge and learning Holy Scripture sets forth, man's reason can and may show the same knowledge and learning, for one can not find in Holy Scripture any truth of natural law which reason does not fully and equally well command to be done.

Wherefore it follows that none of the said natural laws or ordinances is taught by Holy Scripture alone, and therefore the second premise must be true.

The second of the thirteen conclusions is, that only is the true ground of anything upon which it would rest in the absence of all other pretended grounds. So it is in the case of truths of natural law, the knowledge of them may be attained to by the aid of natural reason alone, without the aid of Holy Scripture.

Without following out the reasoning through this syllogism, the interesting matter to note is, the truths which Pecock recites as truths knowable by man's unaided reason. These are: that man must love God above all things; that man must love himself and his neighbor as



himself though not as much as himself; promises made to God must be fulfilled; that he must take care to learn what is pleasing to God; that a man must be temperate in eating and drinking and not gluttonous; that he ought to be meek towards other men and not proud; that he ought to be mild in speech and answer, etc. Reason alone, he contends, proves all these and many more. Pecock in expounding these truths seems to have had the failings and shortcomings of the Lollards in mind.

His viewpoint is interesting in so far as it partly accounts for his overemphasizing the work of reason in coming to the knowledge of truths knowable by reason alone. Certainly the unaided reason of the average man would never come to the knowledge of all the truths which Pecock suggests.

Reason, he continues, also plays a prominent part in evolving truths that necessarily follow from truths revealed or known from reason. In certain cases there is contained in Scripture comparatively little revealed about given truths. Nevertheless there are a great many ordinances following from this revelation and from reason which are none the less true. For example, there is matrimony. In Scripture there are comparatively few places of direct revelation on marriage; the total number would not be a hundreth part of the teachings contained in the book which he has written on matrimony.<sup>7</sup>

#### CHAPTER IV

The third of the thirteen conclusions against the first error: Before God assigned any positive laws to the Jews, from the fall of Adam to the time of the circumcision of Abraham and the positive precepts given to Moses, the people lived and served God, and were bound by almost all the moral ordinances and truths to

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7. Pecock is laying emphasis on the part which reason plays in the evolving of doctrine. The Lollards denied this, going to the other extreme of private interpretation under individual inspiration.

the knowledge of which they attained by the use of reason. These same ordinances of natural law still bind Christians. Moreover the giving of the positive law about judicial and sacramental ceremonies to the Jews did not abrogate the natural law. The Founder of the New Law while abrogating the judicial and sacramental ordinances did not revoke the other ordinances that bound the Jews, but gave new positive laws concerning His sacraments.

Pecock speaks of the Old Law, even the positive laws given to Abraham and Moses, excepting however the judicial and sacramental ordinances about ceremonies, as the "lawe of kinde," *i. e.*, natural law. The New Law comprises this "lawe of kinde" and the positive ordinances of the New Law. Since this is so, he argues, a very great part of the New Law which is "lawe of kinde" is not founded on Holy Scripture of the Old or the New Testament, "but in the book of lawe of kinde written in mennis soulis with the finger of God as it was so groundid and written bifore the daies of Abraham and of Jewis."<sup>8</sup>

Holy Scripture has, however, a function in these truths of natural law knowable by reason alone. It is this and only this. It recalls these truths and exhorts, bids and counsels men upon the virtues and ordinances, to the end that they make use of them and flee their contrary vices. The said ordinances, virtues, and truths can no more be said to be grounded in Holy Scripture than can the virtues, ordinances, and truths of natural law which a bishop happened to mention in his epistle to his diocese, be said to be grounded in the epistle.<sup>9</sup>

## CHAPTER V AND VI

Fifth Argument: Christ, the Apostles, and Holy Scripture, in speaking of any of the aforesaid truths which are known by reason, spoke in such manner as

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8. Pecock, *Repressor*, Chap. IV.

9. *Repressor*, Chap. IV.

implies that these truths were known before. They did not make a new revelation, but exhorted and counselled about truths already known. To say that these ordinances and truths are founded on the words of Christ, the Apostles, or Holy Scripture, is to say that the thing founded was before the thing on which it was founded. Hence it follows that these aforesaid truths are not founded on Scripture, the words of Christ, or the Apostles.

Sixth Argument: From the fact that Holy Scripture affirms truths of natural law to be truths, it does not follow from this that they are founded on Holy Scripture. If, in reasoning thus, you maintain that Scripture is the foundation for such truths, you would have to admit that Scripture is the foundation for truths of natural philosophy. No man will grant this, even if Scripture does make mention and affirms truths of natural philosophy. These truths were knowable before they received an affirmation in the Scriptures. Moreover, the knowledge of them is far more extensive than that contained in Scripture. The same argument can be applied to moral truths of the natural law.

Truths to which the unaided reason of man can attain are more truly in man's soul than in the book of "parchemyn" or "velȳm" of Holy Scripture. Should there arise some "semyng discorde" between the words of Scripture and reason, the words so written must be expounded and interpreted in conformity with reason, and reason should not be made to conform to the "semyng discorde" in the outward words of Scripture.

The author continues to end of Chapter VI multiplying unusual and striking examples almost to tedium. He finally concludes that it can not be said that truths of natural law are founded in Holy Scripture.

## CHAPTER VII

Scripture, as before mentioned, bears witness to the aforesaid truths. Profane writings, however, and Scripture have their own separate and distinct spheres. While Scripture does indeed bear witness to truths of natural law, profane works bear witness to "trouthe of dyuynyte" (divinity), but have neither right nor power to found any Divine ordinance.

Again, the faculty of Canon Law and the faculty of Divinity are two distinct faculties with their proper limitations, "as that Canon Lawe groundith constitucions and ordinancis of general counseilis and of papis and prouyncial (provincial) and synodal constitucions, as hise propre to him, trouthis and conclusiouns; and dyuynyte, in verri maner forto speke of diuinite, groundith articles of feith, that is to seie trouthis and conclusiouns reuelid (revealed) and affermed bi God to be trewe, as propre to him trouthis and conclusiouns, into whos fynding, leorning, and knowing mannis resoun mai not sufficientli with oute revelacioun ascende and come to." Canon Law therefore ought not and may not ground any truth or conclusion which is proper to the sphere of Divinity; nor may Divinity ground any truth proper to Canon Law. Yet books of Canon Law may state many truths and conclusions strictly of Divinity, while books of Divinity may state many truths of Canon Law.

The whole office and work for which God has ordained Holy Scripture is to found articles of faith, and to reaffirm and bear witness to moral truths "of lave of kinde groundid in moral philosophie."

Some of the articles of faith are not laws. Of such are these: "that God made heven and erthe in the bigynnyng of tyme; and that Adam was the firste man and Eve was the first womman; and that Moises ladde the peple of Israel out of Egipt; and that Zacharie was

fadir and Elizabeth was modir of Johun Baptist; and that Crist fastid XL daies; and so forth of many like."

Some are articles of faith which are laws, "as that ech man ought to be baptisid in water, if he may come therto; and that ech man ought to be hosilid (be given the Eucharist) if he may come ther to."

In proof of the conclusion that the work of Holy Scripture is to found articles of faith, he asserts that since the truths of natural law are attainable by reason, truths which are above man's reason must come by means of revelation which is contained in Scripture. These truths above man's reason and contained in revelation are the truths of articles of faith, and it is the special work of Scripture to found such truths.

Pecock concludes this chapter with an interesting remark about the reading of Scripture. He does not object to the laymen reading and studying the Bible, provided they are under the direction of wise and learned clerks, and with the license of their bishop. What he does object to, and this he has attempted to prove to be a false principle, is that laymen take the Scripture for their sole guide, and "bi her inreding in the Bible" come to more knowledge than all the rest of men on earth, lay and cleric, together.

## CHAPTER VIII

Other conclusions against the first error are set forth. A great deal of what has been already stated is repeated. The point of interest is his expansion on the question of truths which are articles of faith. Man's unaided reason can not come to the knowledge of truth which is an article of faith without the assistance of revelation, which is contained in Holy Scripture. An article of faith can not be founded on reason alone. "But so it is that noon article of feith mai be groundid in doom of resoun sufficientli; neither into his finding, leorning,

and knowing mannys resoun bi itsilf and bi natural help may rise and suffice, withoute there to maad revelacioun or affirmyng fro God."

He has developed this idea at greater length in the following works, "Forwhi thanne feith were no feith, as it is taught in 'The folwer to the donet' and to the book of feith and of sacramentis in Latyn." Wherefore moral lawe of kinde which is not ellis than moral philosophie writen depe in mannis soule, there ligging with the prent (imprint) and the ymage of God, mai not grounde eny article or treuthe or conclusioun of feith, but into the grounding of feith serueth Holi Scripture."

#### CHAPTER IX AND X

The argument against the first error is continued throughout Chapter IX and concluded in Chapter X.

No man by the aid of Scripture alone can come to the knowledge of all those truths which all Christians are bound to know. It is difficult for all men, but especially for the untrained mind. On the other hand, the man who is trained in moral philosophy will be greatly assisted in coming to the proper knowledge of God's Law, "no man mai learne and kunne the hool lawe of God to which Cristen men ben bounde, but if he can (know) of moral philosophie; and the more that he can in moral philosophie bi so miche the more he can of Goddis lawe and service."

Where there is question of truths to which the natural reason of man can not attain, that is, supernatural truths knowable only by supernatural revelation, there is no argument. However, even the truths to which man's reason can come by its own unaided power, cannot be perfectly, surely and sufficiently understood in the Scripture, by private interpretation. Certainly a knowledge of moral philosophy would greatly assist in this. "No man schal perfittli, sureli, and sufficientli vndir-



stonde Holi Scripture in alle the placis where yn he rehercith moral vertues not being posityf lawe of feith, but being such as mannys resoun may fynde, learne, and knowe, but if he be bfore weel and perfittli, suerli, and sufficiently leerned in moral philosophie, and more perfittli, suerli, and sufficiently he is leerned in moral philosophie the more able as bi that he schal be forto perfittli, suerli and sufficientli vndirstonde Holi Scripture in alle tho placis wheryn he spekith of eny moral lawe of God being not posityf lawe of faith."

Laymen not well learned in moral philosophy should therefore esteem the clergy who are well trained in this science. The clergy should assist the laymen in the right understanding of Holy Scripture, in those places where the before spoken conclusions and truths of moral philosophy are mentioned. The laymen without the assistance of the clergy shall not easily and lightly understand the proper meaning of Holy Scripture in the aforesaid matters.

In concluding his final argument against the first error of the Lollards, he asks the question: If a man is afraid of trespassing against God if he undervalues the Holy Scripture, why is he not afraid lest he undervalue the "inward Scripture" which is written by God in man's heart? So firmly convinced is he of the truth of his thirteen conclusions against the first error, that he is willing to wager his arm to be smitten off in their defense.

Throughout the various arguments it is to be observed, and this is very striking, that the author has an exception and intimate grasp of the viewpoint and difficulties of his opponents. Not once in the whole discourse does he lose sight of his audience. His arguments are for them. This undoubtedly accounts for his overemphasizing the rôle of reason and moral philosophy in the matter of coming to the knowledge of religious truth. The Lollards, it must be remembered, went to the other

extreme. They minimized the place of reason and suspected and scoffed at moral philosophy.

### CHAPTER XI TO XIII

In these chapters the author takes up and refutes certain quotations which the Lollards were accustomed to advance in support of their position. The first of these texts is 1 Cor. xiii ē in the eende thus, *i. e.* (1 Cor. XIV 38), "Sotheli if eny man unknowith, he schal be unknowun." The Lollards interpret this text to mean that if any man does not literally know the Scripture as it is in the text, "namelich the writing of the Newe Testament," he shall be unknown to God. They busy themselves about learning the text "as it is writun word bi word," and call themselves "knowun men." The answer to this objection is, that the words of St. Paul could not mean this since at this time the New Testament had not been written, neither the second epistle to the Corinthians nor the Apocalypse.

The second text is "ii. Cor. iiii ē in the bigynnyng, where Paul seith thus: That and if oure Euanglie is couered, it is couered to hem whiche spillen; in whiche God of this world hath blinded the myndis or wittis of unfeithful men, that the lighting or cleering of the Euanglie of the glorie of Crist, which is the ymage of God, schine not." This the Lollards take to mean that whoever is a person of salvation shall soon understand the true meaning of Holy Scripture, even of the Apocalypse. Moreover, the true meaning of Scripture shall be hid for none but those who shall perish and be lost. The Lollards or "knownen men" are the children of salvation, all other men being erring sheep and in danger of perishing. To the latter the Gospel is covered, to the former it is known, and this, as Pecoek says, in spite of the fact that both the natural law and the law of faith is known less to them than to those whom they condemn.

As to the text ii<sup>e</sup> Cor. iii<sup>e</sup> ē, the "Euangelie" was not the written text, since the written text did not exist. Before a word of the New Testament had been written Christ commissioned the Apostles, "Go ye, and preche ye the Euanglie to ech creature." Certainly the commission was not to preach a Gospel which did not exist, but a Gospel which they then knew. It follows from this that the Gospel which all men were afterwards to receive unto their salvation was, ere a word of the New Testament was written. The Apostles preached the Gospel soon after Pentecost, "whanne thei hadden receyned the Holy Goost and kunnyng of langage." This they continued to do for many years before they wrote.

The author concludes the first part of his work, and the arguments against the first of the three principal errors, with a discourse upon the sweetness and true dignity of the Holy Scriptures, and the necessity of keeping in mind the distinct spheres of Scripture and moral philosophy. He also dwells upon the importance to be attached to the writings of the Fathers to which the Lollards make an insincere appeal. Some of them might make an appeal to certain passages from the writings of the Fathers, in support of their opinions. However, he is beginning to compose in Latin a book, to which he refers them, entitled, *The Just Apprising of Doctoris*. Those interested in this subject will find there a lengthy treatment of the matter. However, he feels that Patristic authority would have weight with these people only in so far as they might see in it an effective argument against his views.

#### CHAPTER XIV TO XX

There are two objections which his opponents might bring against him. The first is that man's reason is fallible and often fails in its judgments, as experience shows. It is not in keeping with the wisdom of God that man in his service to Him should lean upon a thing so frail. In

answer to this objection he says, it is indeed most profitable to man in matters of sights really to see the object which he gazes upon, but what other power has God given to man to see than his eyesight; and what eyesight is there that will not fail at sometime? The same may be said for hearing, or for walking, all of which powers will at some time fail. In like manner reason, though it is very desirable that it should not, will at some time fail. But God has given to man no other power by which he can know these truths (truths other than supernatural) and this power is one that may fail. If, however, in the pursuit of such truths we exercise our powers to the best of our ability, God will demand no more.

The second objection: Holy Scripture is a sacred and worthy thing since by it and from it the Christian Church of God takes its faith. Therefore it does not seem that God would make Scripture dependent upon reason for its proper understanding and interpretation, since reason is a fallible instrument and Scripture is a worthier. This objection he answers in Chapter XV. In the meantime, in Chapter XIV, he gives further reasons in answer to the first objection. When he says that God has ordained reason to be our guide in these matters, he does not mean the power of reason simply, but rather a formal complete argument called a syllogism, both premises of which are known to be surely or likely to be true. The conclusion of such a syllogism is the infallible guide. If the premises are surely known the conclusion is true without a doubt. Of such are fundamental truths. If the premises are to be considered likely true, the conclusion is to be held as true until it can be proven to the contrary.

As to the second objection, from considerations already pointed out it is clear that it would not be unbecoming in God to ordain the human reason and judgment to be "*reulis to Holi Scripture*," in all the truths therein set forth. It is alleged that Holy Scripture was

worthier than "doom of reason." But what is Holy Scripture? It might be taken to mean the letters of various shapes and figures written on parchment or vellum. In this sense it is not holier or better than any other writing, "which hath like good ink and is like craftily figured." In another sense it may be understood as "the kunnyng wherebi the thing is kunne which is signified and bitokened by the now seid outward Holy Writ," or it may be taken for the outward writing coupled with the knowledge of the truths signified thereby. So also "doom of reason" may be taken in two senses. In one sense it is the act of reasoning by making syllogisms; in another sense it is the cognizance of the conclusion arrived at by such syllogisms. Now, if in the second objection Holy Scripture be understood in the second sense, and doom of reason in the second sense, surely Holy Scripture, where it rehearses and teaches "moral law of kinde" (natural law), is less worthy than "moral law of kinde" itself and therefore less worthy than "doom of reason" taken in the second sense, since here it only borrows the truths which it sets forth from "moral law of kinde." Certainly if Holy Writ be worthier in any of its truths than "doom of reason," it is in matters of faith which are not laws to man, and which reason can not ground. Such are the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and so forth. And yet whether Scripture be more profitable to man than doom of reason in the second sense, to enable him to serve God and deserve meed in heaven, the author will not discuss in his book, but may perhaps in other writings, "to hearers of higher understanding." He will only refer to proofs already given that all the faith, grounded on Scripture, which is a positive law to man is not so valuable or necessary for him "as is the said doom of reason, being ('moral law of kind')."

The author seems to feel, for an instant, that in his argument, he is soaring above the heads of his audience.

However, if it is true that he has written or said more "than wole anoon accorde with the capacite of the Bible men" he would much rather do so than either say or write less, thus giving them the impression that their two objections could not be answered. Men so impressed might be led to believe that by poring over the Bible alone they would be able to solve all difficulties without taking counsel of substantial clerks, "weel leerned in logic and in moral philosophie." If there were not such men to expound Scripture, or the laity would not attend to their teaching, but trust only to their own wits and texts of the Bible before them, it would give rise to such various opinions, "that al the world schulde be cumbrid therewith, and men schulden accorde to gidere in keping her service to God as doggis doon in a market whanne ech of hem terith otheris coot." One man would understand a text one way, another in another way, and a third in a third way. Wherever Scripture speaks of any point of "moral law of kind," the language is such as requires "a redressing of it into accordance with lawe of kinde and with doom of reason." Without a judge to settle disputes, there would be no end of strife. This was the very cause of the ruin of "the worthy city and university of Prague," and of the whole realm of Bohemia. After the most unhappy experience of dissensions the people were now glad to return to the Catholic faith and to rebuild what was burnt and thrown down. How true are the words of our Lord when He said, "that ech kingdom deuidid in hem self schal be destroyed." His earnest prayer is that such a disturbance may never come to England, "God for his merci and pitee kepe Ynglond that he come not into lyk daunce."

These "Bible men" had only to observe the schisms and dissensions amongst themselves to see the absurdity of their principles. They had relied upon their own wit in interpreting the Scripture. See the results. "And



therefore ye Bible men, bi this here now seid which ye muste needis graunte, for experience which ye han of the disturblaunce in Beeme, and also of the disturblaunce and dyuerse feelings had among you silf now in Ynglond, so that summe of you ben clepid Doctour mongers, and summe ben clepid Opinioun holders, and summe ben Neutralis, that of so presumptuose a cisme abhominacioun to othere men and schame to you it is to heere."

The matter of choosing a wise counsellor from amongst the clergy was of the greatest importance. No better advice in such a matter could be given than that of Ecclesiastics, vjc "manie be to thee pesible, but of a thousand oon be thi counseiler." "And in special be waar that thou not accepte, chese and take a clerk for to be sufficient to thee into the now seid purpos bi this aloon, that he mai were a pilioun<sup>10</sup> on his heed; neither bi this that he is a famose and plesaunt precher to the people in a pulpit; neither by this that he is a greet and thikke rateler out of textis of Holi Scripture, or of Doctouris in feestis or in othere companyingis, fer certis experience hath ofte taught and mai here teche surely ynough that summe werers of piliouns in scole of dyuynyte han scantli be worthi for to be in the same scole a good scoler."

Pecock feels that since he is treating the question of preachers he must say something about the matter of preaching. The office of preaching is to exhort and to reiterate truths, rather than to expound and set forth arguments in support of truth. If preaching is wanting in these qualities, it loses its essential characteristic. Disputing and proving is the special field of teaching, which has its proper setting in the lecture hall, whereas the lecture hall is no place for preaching, which has its proper place in the pulpit. The great need of the time is teaching, which gives men the grounding necessary for the repressing of error, and the understanding of God's

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10. A doctor's cap.

law. Mere preaching ability is no panacea for the evils that have arisen from the need of proper training in disputation. Some good preachers, amongst the lay party, who have had no further training at school than in grammar, can, by their quoting of texts and reciting of parables, preach "ful gloriously" for the satisfaction of the people, leaving the impression that they are men of wisdom, when in reality, if they were opposed in any one of the texts or parables, they could not defend it. It is to such untrained minds as these that errors, disturbance and schism can be traced.

The author makes a statement which is worthy of notice in so far as it gives an insight into his character. As we have noted before, his sincerity and boldness of speech made him no respecter of persons when there was question of principle involved. In this instance he does not hesitate to reprimand his sovereign in very pointed and unmistakable language: "But wolde God that the King of Ynglond wolde sette so myche bisynes forto conquere and reforme his lond of Ynglond fro this seid wickid scole, and fro othere defaultis, as miche as he dooth aboute the conquest of his lond of Normandi and of Fraunce, and peraventure he schulde thanne haue more thanke and reward at his last comyng hoom to the King of blisse, and more noble flauour of digne fame among alle the princis of the world and the worthi peeris of heuen, than he schal haue bi much of his labour and cost doon aboute worldli conquest of Fraunce."

Pecock now proceeds to the refutation of the second erroneous opinion of the Lollards. That every humble Christian shall come to the understanding of the true meaning of Scripture, is a false proposition, as can be demonstrated both from experience. He has known certain humble individuals who have come to an opinion about certain passages of Holy Writ, but afterwards, without becoming more humble, have arrived at another opinion about the same things. Their own experience should be

for them convincing evidence of the falsehood of the proposition. Moreover, adherents of the error often hold divergent opinions about the same passage of Scripture. Moreover the matter of individual righteousness or sinfulness does not enter into the understanding of Scripture. Experience is against it, since a bad clerk can arrive at the meaning of a passage of Scripture as readily as a good clerk; what is more, both will arrive at the same meaning. The understanding of a passage of Scripture is the work of the intellect and “a badde man and a ful yuel disposid man in wil and in affect mai haue so cler and so well disposid witt and reson into all thingis to be founde bi witt, as hath a good man well disposid in manneris of his affect and wil.” Therefore, the second principal opinion is erroneous.

The third principal error:—The true sense of Scripture being once attained to by humble diligence, no human arguments opposing this true sense should be admitted. Such an opinion is contrary to the teaching of Scripture, as is seen from “1 Petri iii<sup>e</sup> c.” He goes on to say that without doubt man’s intellect can not come to the knowledge of truth without argument. This applies to truths which the intellect can attain to by its own powers, and to truths of faith properly so called, since none of these truths can be grasped unless by examination of their evidence.

There is a fourth opinion, the adherents of which maintain that if a man keeps God’s law he shall always have the proper understanding of Holy Scripture, otherwise he will never come to its understanding. This opinion is also contrary to experience. Careful investigation has placed at his disposal irrefutable evidence. Among the holders of this opinion he has found even prominent teachers and persons in authority among this sect who are living impure and adulterous lives, and some indeed are thieves. They dare not deny these accusations, for he is prepared to prove any of his statements. All

men know, and these sinners themselves know, that such sins are serious offenses against the law of God, and still they imagine that they have the true understanding of Holy Scripture and no man has a better or truer understanding of it than they.

These same men accuse prelates of the Church of being evil-doers against God's law. He admits that the prelates, being men and not angels, are not without faults, still their faults have been exaggerated and certain faults have been attributed to them of which they are not guilty. From this and the context which follows it is evident that the accusations made against the prelates were of faults in administering their dioceses. Pecoek advises his readers not to be too hasty in such judgments, since they have no idea of the grave hardships a bishop experiences in trying to govern his diocese. Acts should be judged by their motives, not by the mere facts. He himself has heard of censures passed upon him for the government of his diocese, which he is sure the censors themselves would have revoked if they had known all the circumstances.

He concludes Part 1 of his work with the statement that it is beyond his comprehension how a good and thoughtful man could be a Lollard. He understands, however, that many were beguiled by shallow reasoning and thus led astray into dangerous paths.

In this first part of Pecoek's principal work, we have attempted to give a summary of his principal doctrines; and those especially important, since it was in the treatment of this part that he overreached himself, for reasons already given, and became heretical. It may seem to some rather detailed and perhaps fatiguing, but when one considers the magnitude of the work itself this treatment will appear quite summary. As we have already stated, it is not our purpose to enter the controversy as to Pecoek's orthodoxy or heterodoxy. The doctrines involved in controversy of this sort are such,

and the history of their development is so important, that the maximum space possible to allot for their treatment would be altogether inadequate. A volume or several volumes of generous proportions would not be too extensive for an exhaustive treatment of the matter.

The aim of this part of the dissertation is primarily literary. This we have kept before us in selecting passages, and in choosing arguments; we wished to emphasize something of the mentality of the author, his logic, his power of expression, and something of his own personality as reflected in his writings.

The remaining four parts of the work will be dismissed very summarily. There will be no particular effort made to follow the logical argument. Our purpose will be to choose certain arguments and passages that seem to cast further light upon what has been said.

## PART II

The author's purpose in the next four parts of the *Repressor* is to offer a defense of the eleven Church ordinances against the erroneous attack of the Lollards. But before taking up the defense proper, he lays down in the systematic fashion of the schoolmen certain suppositions or rules which are apparent to everyone. These shall assist in proving and justifying each of the eleven ordinances.

These suppositions or rules are:

(1) An ordinance expressly given by an authority, whether this authority be God, man, angel, or Scripture, implies the carrying out of everything logically involved in it. It may be fulfilled in different ways, but that way is best, which most effectively attains the end sought.

(2) An ordinance may be enjoined not expressly in words, but in various ways that point unmistakably to the will of the authority.

(3) In both of these aforesaid rules, wherever the authority points to the observance of an ordinance, it thereby enjoins and sanctions all means necessary to the fulfillment of the ordinance, for example: he, Pecoek, orders his servant to attend the sermon at Paul's Cross, which implies of course that he ordered or suggested to the servant that he should learn something from that sermon; it also implied that he ordered or suggested that he go out the gate, and take one of several ways to Paul's Cross, avoiding, however, any particular way, that may interfere with the fulfillment of the command.

From this, four conclusions follow:

(a) Holy Scripture teaches us: to love God with all our hearts; to love all that God loves; and to despise all that He does not love. All of His law and service follow from these principles, such as: reading Holy Scripture, listening to sermons, meditating upon pictures and images, going on pilgrimages to places where holy men dwell or have dwelt, or where their relics still remain. Holy Scripture sanctions all these methods.

(b) Each of the eleven ordinances is virtually or implicitly commanded or recommended by Holy Scripture.

(c) Each is thus founded on Scripture.

(d) If the bidding, counselling, or witnessing of Holy Scripture to a truth of "moral law of kind" were a grounding in Scripture in the sense indicated in previous passages of his treatise, undoubtedly the whole of the eleven ordinances which he proposes to vindicate were really grounded in Holy Scripture properly understood.

This second part of the Repressor is devoted to the vindication of the use of images and the going on pilgrimages.

The use of images in Churches as signs to commemorate and recall are not reprov'd either by Scripture or



“by long vse of Chirchis bileeuynge neither bi eny myraculose thereto of God wirching (working).”

Amongst his arguments are these: Solomon made various images for his temple and was commended for it by God; to the people of Israel it was permitted to raise up a brazen serpent, why wonder that it is lawful to raise up an image of Christ crucified; if it is lawful to have an image of an earthly king, why not have an image of the King in Heaven; Christ permitted the use of the coin upon which there was an image of an earthly king.

He continues that it is very explicitly stated in the Scriptures that an image raised up as a false God is unlawful, but it is not unlawful when not set up as a false God.

In truth erroneous opinions regarding the use of images may be held, but it does not follow from this that images should be forbidden. The saints, like St. Bernard, St. Nicholas, and St. Martin, worked miracles. Simple minded people of their day may have thought that these wonders were the result of the saints' own power, but it would not follow that these saints should be hindered or put to death on account of this. Moreover, as regards some images, it is not a false and foolish opinion to hold that they have worked miracles, since experience has undoubtedly shown it to be so.

Again, it is not unlawful to have images as reminding signs, for “Whanne euere Holy Scripture biddith, counseilith, or allowith eny eende, he ther yn and ther bi biddith, counseilith, or allowith, or approueth ech meene profitable into the same eende.” Christ ordained in the New Law His Sacraments, sensible and reminding signs of His life, passion, and death, as is seen and proved in *The Book of Sacramentis*, or in *The bookis of Baptim and of Eukarist*. Thus Holy Scripture gives testimony

that the use of sensible, reminding signs, is lawful, expedient, and profitable, otherwise the Sacraments of Christ would be unlawful, inexpedient, and unprofitable.

### PART III

A justification of the endowments of the clergy and their right to possess property:

Arguments from Scripture, both the Old and New Testament, are expounded by the author, showing that the clergy may lawfully possess landed property. Arguments to the contrary are refuted. He then advanced five arguments which some of the laity used against clerical endowments. These are: simony and avarice are their natural outcome. What is more Christ did not appoint them. Again, it has been the experience of ecclesiastical history that as the clergy became more endowed with this world's goods, they grew worldlier and more corrupt. An angel exclaimed that poison was infused into the Church the day that Constantine made his donation to the Church of Rome. The power over life and death accruing to bishops and abbots in virtue of ecclesiastical endowments, is most objectionable and cruel.

Each argument is given separate consideration and refuted. To the argument about the donation of Constantine Pecoock replies that from various historical evidence this gift of Constantine has been proven to be fabulous.

### PART IV

A vindication of the various ranks and degrees amongst the clergy; also of the lawfulness of statutes and canons made by ecclesiastical authorities.

It is seen from Scripture, both Testaments of which allowed this variety of ranks and degrees. In the Old Testament God ordained that one bishop was to be "in rule and jurisdiction" over all the clergy, just as the Pope is now one person governing the clergy in God's

Church. Certainly Scripture did not forbid this variety of ranks, but on the contrary sanctions it.

Then follows proof from the New Testament that Peter was made "head" of the Church by Christ. He refers the reader to "Johun first chapiter" and to i<sup>e</sup> Cor. ix<sup>e</sup> c; i<sup>e</sup> Cor. XV<sup>e</sup> 4c; Galat ij<sup>e</sup> c.

The variety of degrees in the hierarchy is lawful in the most proper manner of speaking of lawfulness. That it is true is proven thus. Whatever governance Holy Scripture and clearly disposed reason allow and approve, is lawful in the most proper manner of speech in which one can speak of lawfulness. But Holy Scripture and reason allow and approve of these various degrees in the hierarchy.

The Lollards unjustly and falsely accuse, that the Pope and lesser Bishops impose ecclesiastical laws over and above Divine law, and contrary to it. In answering this false accusation he says: "It is leeful to princis with hir comsunalte forto make politik and cyuyle lawis and ordinauncis for the better reule of the peple in temporal and cyuyl gouernauncis, longing into worldli pees and prosperite, and worldi welthe, to be the better therbi kept and contynued." Certainly St. Paul in his letter to Timothy, "i<sup>e</sup> Thim. 1<sup>e</sup> c," has made it very clear that the laws made by temporal rulers must be respected and obeyed. He even cautions the bondman to be obedient to his master. In like manner, the spiritual rulers must be obeyed in those laws and ordinances imposed for the spiritual welfare of men. What is more, these spiritual rulers can have recourse to such sanctions as are necessary for the attainment of this end.

He then gives certain arguments in support of certain ecclesiastical laws made by spiritual authority. If Scripture does not forbid, and reason does not forbid, then such ordinances are lawful. In the case of ecclesiastical laws neither of these forbids.

Again: Whatever ordinances were introduced into the Church by the Apostles or by their consent, are lawful, and worthy to be had and used. But the fourth, fifth, and sixth principal governances, treated in this work, namely, the distinction in the ranks of the hierarchy, the framing of ecclesiastical laws and ordinances by papal and episcopal authority, the institution of the religious, were introduced into the Church with consent or at least not against the wishes of the Apostles. This premise is proved from the writings of St. Dionysius the Acreopagite in his *The Chirchis Ierarchie*, where in Chapter VI he says, "that the grete dukis of the Chirche, which lyueden with the Apostolis, maden and ordeynedan, the religioun of monkehode to be had and vsid in the Chirche."<sup>11</sup> Also in the same book mention is made of positive laws made by the "seid dukis and reulers of the Chirche," who lived in the time of the Apostles. Of such were the regulations about the administering of baptism,<sup>12</sup> and, "how the sacrament of the auter schulde be mad, and how the masse schal be seid, and how the mynystris schulen be araied, and what officis thei schulen do"<sup>13</sup> . . . what and how manie thingis schulen be doon aboute a man whanne he schal be mad bischop,<sup>14</sup> what and how manie thingis schulen be doon about a man whanne he schal be mad preest<sup>15</sup> . . . what and how manie thingis schulen be doon aboute a man if he be mad a monk<sup>16</sup> . . . and to a bischop ben reserved these powers, that is to seie, for to halewe creme (chrism), for to halewe chirchis and auteris and for to give orderis of preesthode and of dekenhode."<sup>17</sup>

Likewise Holy Scripture demonstrates this. St. Paul (1 Cor. xi.) made an ordinance to the men of Corinth

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11. De Eccl. Hierech, c. 6.

12. Id. c. 2.

13. Id. c. 3.

14. Id. c. 5.

15. Id. c. 5.

16. Id. c. 6.

17. Id. c. 5.

that they should not "take her hosil (Holy Eucharist) at night" after her soper (or in sum other special maner thanne vsid, not now sureli knowen) for to therbi contrifete Cristis doing at his soper." He goes on to say that St. Paul gave this regulation notwithstanding the fact that the former custom had been one of long standing. Furthermore, St. Paul warns them that he will come to them and establish more laws and ordinances.

## PART V

Throughout Part V of this work, the author gives an exhaustive treatment of the question of religious orders and religious life. He sets forth various arguments, quite to the point, both from reason and Scripture, in support of his thesis: that religious orders are not merely not contrary to the laws of God but are in conformity with the ideals enunciated in the Scripture. He argues thus: the religious life makes many more men in Christendom morally virtuous and good, or much less vicious and bad, than they would have been had they not entered the religious life. Certainly there have been hundreds of thousands who have led the life of religious and have led lives much less vicious and evil than they would have, had they lived as laymen. Take all the men who have entered the religious life since its foundation, and mark well how they would have lived had they not entered religion. Certainly they would not have lived lives different from the men living in the world in their day, such as "gileful crafti men, or iurouris and quest-mongers, or pleders for mony, or as sowdiers forto fight and slee for spoile and money," or, as they in Peckock's time see nearly all worldly people live, who live covetously and according to the flesh, untruly to God and to man.

As to the words of the Apostles about false teachers, certainly they do not refer, as the Lollards maintain, to

the religious orders, but to the various false teachers who lived in the time of the Apostles and after the Apostles down through the ages, to Wycliffe. He specifies thirty-six different bodies of heretics that had arisen at various times from the days of the Apostles to those of Wycliffe. He states that there were many more heretical sects than these, as is seen from Ysidor in the viij<sup>e</sup> book of his "Ethymologies," and Austyn in his book "of heresies." To see these heresies at length, he must read the book composed by "Epiphanius the Greke," and that of "Philaster the Latyn writer."

It is interesting to note, since Pecock was accused of denying the existence of the Holy Ghost, that among the various sects which he enumerates are those who denied either the presence of the Holy Ghost among the Apostles as did the "Cataphrygians or Montanists," who maintained that the Holy Ghost came not into the Apostles but into the members of their own sect, or those who denied the existence of the Holy Ghost as God, as did the Sabellians, "which holden that of the Fadir, Sone, and Holy Goost is not but oon person," or the Macedonians "which helden that the Holy Goost was not God" and the Donatists "which helden that the Sone is lasse than the Fadir, and the Holi Goost lasse than the Sone."

Such were the views set forth in Pecock's principal literary undertaking. Our purpose was to lay a synopsis of the work before the reader, emphasizing the most important principles set forth in the treatise, keeping in mind that it is best to let the author speak for himself. The phrasing, terminology, and argumentation is Pecock's. We have refrained from a great deal of comment, or interpretation. In the following chapter we will enter upon a more detailed study of Pecock as a literary artist and the exponent of fifteenth century prose.



## CHAPTER V

REGINALD PECOCK, THE EXPONENT OF FIFTEENTH  
CENTURY PROSE.

The foregoing is a synoptic review, a general impression of Pecoek's thought, artistic appreciation, power of expression, and literary qualifications. His other literary productions might have lent themselves to the same purpose, but the results would have been less conclusive. The *Repressor* is his greatest work, and his principal work. Moreover, it was the principles advanced in this treatise that eventually, in his own day, gave rise to the accusation of heresy, and in our day, give occasion, but not with justification, to certain writers to hail him as a prophet of Protestantism and of the modern school of Rationalism.

Pecoek the man of letters is the subject of our present undertaking, and one of the two primary objects of the work as a whole. With these considerations before us, we shall enter upon a more thorough investigation of his literary qualities properly so called. In the course of this study, excerpts from other of his writings will be introduced in confirmation of findings observed in the *Repressor*, or in evidence of literary characteristics not to be found in it. Also recourse will be had to other contemporary prose writers, or to prose writers of the fifteenth century period, to the end that in the comparison we may ascertain our author's rightful place among the exponents of the prose of his age.

Perpetuation is an end to which all living things tend. It is a natural impulse coming from God Himself. Man lives to this world in the offspring which he begets in the physical order; but in the children of his mentality he bequeathes to posterity something more inti-

imately himself, and as superior as mind is above matter. The man of letters in the offspring of his intelligence leaves behind himself, his personality, his moods, his tempers, his joys, his sorrows, his emotions, his passions, his temperament, and his eccentricities. If we grasp this we comprehend the meaning of the term literature. Literature is not science; nor is science literature; literature has to do with ideas, science with realities; literature is characteristically personal, science comprehends the universal and external. Literature is no longer literature, but becomes science, when it ceases to be personal; when it ceases to be individual; when it ceases to be Shakespeare, or Browning, or Tennyson. Although this is particularly true of verse and not so readily recognizable in prose, it is nevertheless true of both. No one who is sensitive to the prose style of Macaulay, or Burke, or Newman can deny it for an instant. The trained ear of the experienced reader will detect the author without difficulty. There is something in the rhythm, the phrasing, the mode of expression that is differentiating; and like the soothing outpouring of a crystal spring it gives evidence of the source whence it came.

In approaching the study of an author these ideas must be borne in mind. The historical facts of a writer's life assist undoubtedly in the better understanding of his work, but the fruit of his imagination and intellect must, if he is worthy of the name, introduce us to a phase of his life and character which history very often leaves untold. We approach the task in the rôle of a modern critic, with preconceived ideas, and modern canons of criticism—it is difficult completely to dispel all such, and not wholly to be desired—and we find that in reality the fundamental qualities of literature are not circumscribed by time, or race, or language. This is true of art in general. Every age and people since history began—we may suppose that even before its dawn—has had its own artistic souls; its own truly great literary men.

There is a rise and fall among nations and individuals in the literary world; not a regular progression towards a higher state of perfection with each succeeding generation; but something fitful, and capricious for which there is no satisfactory explanation. This phenomenon can not wholly be accounted for by the tastes and demands of any particular age or people. These may accidentally modify it; Homer is Greek reflecting the Greek mentality and culture; the Sacred Scriptures are Hebrew and cannot conceal their origin; Cicero is Rome at the height of its glory; but the fundamental qualities that make them eternal and universal in their appeal are the fundamental qualities of all art, which are eternal and universal.

Reginald Peacock was first of all a churchman, and, whatever his literary interests and acquisitions may have been, they were all handmaidens to the one great interest of his life, the quest of immortal souls. Often writing was to him a science, and not always an art; a science used as a means for strengthening the relation of souls with their Creator. Very early in his career, he came to realize the power of written language as a means to this end. He had seen it utilized by the enemies of the Church, in bringing about deplorable conditions to the amending of which he had dedicated his life and his abilities.

His treatment of the subject-matter was not that of a purely scientific treatise, although the subject-matter itself was such as lent itself to a purely scientific treatment. Writers before and since have filled volumes in handling the same topics in a purely scientific way. Circumstances determined Peacock's method; and these same circumstances influenced him as a man of letters. One might conjecture what he might have produced had he sought literature as an end in itself; one may, however, with very good reason, determine the nature of his work, had he had recourse to a purely scientific method in the

execution of his writings. In all likelihood, he would have followed the traditional and conventional method of the schools, and by doing so would have accomplished little or nothing in a literary way for his native language. The influence of the Lollard controversy on the prose of the period is readily understood, when one realizes that Pecock wrote for a class of people, the average of whom had no scientific training. His writings to be effective must conform to the capacities of this class, with the consequence that there was a reciprocal influence of the popular treatise upon his literary style, as well as his influence upon the popular treatise.

His principal work is really an attempt to popularize the traditional scholastic treatises of the schoolmen. His success was greater than it would have been had the master-workman been less fitted to the task than was the author of the *Repressor*. In our opinion the stereotyped form of the schoolmen's treatise, while lending itself to logical argumentation, has, from a purely literary point of view, a made-to-order woodenness about it that lacks that originality and spontaneity of expression and emotion so essential to art. It has an unrealness that suggests a superimposed veneer. Pecock, particularly in his *Repressor*, has taken this made-to-order form of the Latin treatise, and under the necessity of accommodating himself to the capacity of the populace, has embellished it with much that is of literary merit. The heavier lumber, the uprights and the crossbeams, are still quite visible. For the student of St. Thomas, or for those acquainted with more recent treatises on scholastic philosophy, or even with the contemporary treatise "*Gladius Salomonis*,"<sup>1</sup> the general outlines of the Latin treatise appearing in Pecock's works can not be disguised. Pecock's early training at Oxford, the stronghold in England of the schoolmen's philosophy, betrays itself on every page. Logic and the syllogism were almost an

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1. John Bury's answer to Pecock.

obsession with him. They were the one panacea for all evils, and, strange to say, it seemed the workings of fate that his logic was one of the factors that contributed so much to his downfall.

It is in the general outlines of his literary form that this influence is most noticeable. He expounds "eleven" articles, setting forth reasons in support of them; but before starting upon the task proper, he will carry the warfare immediately into the enemy lines, expounding three fundamental errors, the downfall of which will mean the utter collapse of the enemy stronghold. Later he takes up thirteen conclusions, and quite after the method of St. Thomas himself, centres his whole attack about the syllogism.<sup>2</sup> He establishes his major premise, his minor and his conclusion, very methodically offering arguments in confirmation of them. This exhaustive method is, indeed, conclusive, but fatiguing to the reader, since the interest lags after several interesting arguments have been advanced in support of the same premise. If a criticism is to be offered, it should be said that there is a superfluity of argument. His scholastic training is seen again in this, that he foresees the vulnerable points of his argument, and sets himself to the defense.

The subject-matter of the *Repressor*, strictly speaking, belongs in the scientific treatise. For reasons already suggested, the author under force of circumstances produced a modified form of the traditional treatise, and not the treatise properly so called. Many of the characteristics of the literary form known several centuries<sup>3</sup> later, as the essay have been introduced, still the *Repressor* could never be classified as an essay. What the author of the *Repressor* really attained to, although it can not be said that he intended it or even adverted to the fact, was what has since come to be called the popular treatise.

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2. *Repressor*, Chap. II, Pt. I.

3. Montaigne, *End of 16th Century*.

Pecock had other adventures in literary form. While the treatise is in reality the proper medium of expression for the subject-matter of his various productions, still in the "Book of Faith" we find him attempting the dialogue. It is not the dialogue properly so called; not the dialogue as Plato conceived it, but rather as Berkely conceived it; and very successfully Pecock utilized it to the end that a popular turn be given to certain very dogmatic opinions, about which there is no diffidence, there are no half-lights, in the writer's own mind. The dialogue is essentially an essay, an essay now and then taking on other qualities of both prose and poetry; full of every art to captivate the fancy, winning, dramatic, eloquent, full of digression; now relieving the mind by the most playful humour; now rising into solemnity and poetry. With Pecock such a form was uncalled for; his subject did not lend itself to it nor did he rise in his efforts to the highest and most limited form of the dialogue. With Plato the dialogue is essential, necessary, organic; the very form belongs to the matter which it embodies, for Plato's Dialogues reflect the actual method in which, by preference to anything like formal lecturing, Socrates conveyed his doctrine to others. It is the literary transformation, in a word, of what was the intimate and homely method of Socrates, not only of conveying truth to others but of arriving at it himself. Always it is Socrates, still loitering in the market place or sauntering forth upon the streets and suburban roads of Athens seeking truth from others,<sup>4</sup> seeking it, doubtless, from himself, but along with, and by the help of, his supposed scholars.

When we say that Pecock attempts the dialogue in the "Book of Faith," it must be understood only that the very general outlines of the dialogue are adopted. The stiffness of the scientific treatise is relieved by the introduction of a conversation between father and son. It is

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4. Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, p. 158.



a spiritual father and a spiritual son; Peckock himself and an imaginary zealous seeker after truth, who is a rather precocious youth of considerable experience and training. Neither of the personages can disguise his early training in the methods of the schools. They discuss at length with syllogism, with majors and minors and conclusions, distinguishing and conceding. The matter of their discussion is the very scientific tract on faith which is treated in text-books of dogmatic theology under the heading: "Tractatus De Fide." The father and son carry on the discussion in the form of a dialogue throughout the first seven chapters, when very abruptly the dialogue ceases and the author addresses himself to an imaginary opponent, a Lollard, and a very attentive listener who neither questions, nor replies. In Part II the same topic is continued in the dialogue form.

In the "Book of Faith" we see Peckock less hampered, at work in a more comprehensive and elastic literary form, in which there is greater play for his originality and spontaneity. The same observation is applicable to individual passages of his other works; but in the "Book of Faith," which is one of his latest productions, the author seems to be at his best. There is an unction and rhythm in his expression; the wording and phrasing come rolling forth with a facility and perfection, like a fabric from a well regulated and well adjusted loom. The experience of years of writing undoubtedly was manifesting itself; but unquestionably the freedom of the dialogue was a prime factor.

Before quitting the general characteristics, we must see something more of our author's technique in the execution of his zealous labours. As is to be expected from a mind so logical, trained in a system almost mechanical in its rigidity, unity of thought and purpose is outstanding in all his works. The fault, if it be a fault, to which we have already referred, is not only characteristic of the writings, but of the man himself. He

attempts to be exhaustive, and perhaps emphatic, by what would seem in our day a needless repetition of like arguments.

Our author has shown in his workmanship a knowledge of the technical aspect of writing which is of a very high order and in advance of the contemporary writers of vernacular prose. The individual treatise taken as a whole approaches nearer to technical perfection than does the individual sentence or paragraph. To some it may seem an exaggeration to speak of Pecock, in the matter of technique, as the Newman of the fifteenth century. Certainly no prose writer of the period handled the sentence with such skill. This is especially true of the periodic sentence, the frequent use of which is characteristic of Pecock. He did not, however, confine himself to the use of this one particular structure. Throughout his writings, every kind of sentence, which writers of the best periods of prose have utilized, are to be found. The following quotation is what rhetoricians would call a periodic sentence. It is a striking example of Pecock's control over the "period":

"Fadir, it semeth to my resoun out of this to folowe, that if Cristen clergie wer wel avisid of the evydencis which myghten prove her bileeve of ech article, and if the seid Cristen clergie wolden gadere tho evydencis togidere, ordynatli and formabli, in forme of silogismes, forto have redili and currauntli at honde and at mouthe, whanne ever nede were to make bi hem eny profis, and if herwith the Iewis and the Sarracenes wolden geve audience for to heere and now seid evydencis to be myngstrid to hem in the seid foorme, and bi sufficient leiser at dyvers tymes, the Cristen clergie schulde conviete, and in maner constreyne, or ellis nede the undirstonding,

bothe of alle Iewis and of all Sarracenes, to bileeve after Cristen feith, and to be convertid therto, where thei wolden or nolden.'<sup>5</sup>

The very frequent use of such long sentences, both of periodic and of loose structure, but especially the latter, is quite characteristic of the prose writings of the period. It is, however, a fault. We feel that the style would be relieved, the reading made more pleasurable, and the sense conveyed with greater facility, were the long sentence broken up. Peckock in this respect sins less against the canons of rhetoric than any of his contemporaries.

Certainly the author of the Repressor has no peer in the realm of fifteenth century prose. While one, or perhaps two, can in some respects rank with him, in form and finesse all are inferior. With writers like Wycliffe and Chaucer, while they have not attained to the same degree of development of a literary prose style, nevertheless their inferiority in this matter is more than compensated for by their thought, and by their purity and simplicity of language, together with their originality and strikingness of expression. Wycliffe, among the earliest of the period, and leader of a movement, was a radical thinker rather than a literary man. His English is clear and nervous, rather stiff, and shows a great deal of sameness in rhythm and phrasing. He looked to what the words conveyed, rather than to the words and their artistic arrangement. Imagination is lacking, or rather he never allows himself to be carried away by it, but is almost always guided by his intellect, if not labouring under some prejudice. One short characteristic phrase is sufficient for the thought as it occurs. To give diversity and color to his diction by the unexpected use of a striking word in the right place; to heighten the effect by a wise economy in the arrangement and expression; to the idea of such devices he seems never to have ad-

verted. One could never imagine a sermon of Wycliffe eloquent, unless Wycliffe himself preached it. But from the mouth of Wycliffe all the burning emotionalism of his being, all the uncontrolled zeal of the conventional reformer, crowned by a dominating personality, would pour forth in the highest form of eloquence.

The following is quite typical of Wycliffe's prose style. Other passages, more emotional, almost tragic, might be chosen from those scenes in which he rails against the pope whom he stigmatises as Anti-Christ; but a quieter and saner passage is more to our purpose in ascertaining his usual style and form. It is to be observed that his great mentality always made him propound a doctrine favourable to the king and nobles. He says:

“The King hath a jurisdiction and power of the persons of high Prelates and less Priests, and goods of holy church. That Solomon put down one high priest, and ordained another in his place, and outlawed the first without axing help of Clerks, for traitery don to Solomon and his people; and treason agenst Christ and his law, and his people, is more then treason agenst an earthly Kinge, and more shulde be punished. That as Peter and Paul techen, lords ben ordained of God to venge misdeeds and misdoers, and to praise good deeds and good doers.”<sup>6</sup>

At a glance, it will be seen that the author is making little effort at a finished prose style. The impression received is that the author has one principal idea in mind, and that about it he has gathered relative ideas in support which he is freely jotting down.

In “The Persones Tale” Chaucer has bequeathed to us an interesting prose treatise on penance. Like the

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6. MS. e. 11 Of Servants and Lords MS. The spelling is greatly modernized.

works of both Pecock and Wycliffe this prose work is devoted to the expounding of a religious doctrine. The man of letters in this period seems to have appreciated the fact that prose was the only medium for imparting didactic religious teaching. The treatise is invaluable not so much from the theological viewpoint, although in this respect it is the greatest extant English prose treatise on the subject in that period, but it is invaluable, as a sequence to the *Canterbury Tales*, in so far as it opens a new vista into the inner life and character of that extraordinary literary genius of the fourteenth century. Ten Brink makes this observation which is very much to the point, "Such a conclusion is not strange; on the contrary, it is in perfect harmony with the spirit of the Middle Ages. And yet it is most significant as showing Chaucer's frame of mind when he gave the final touches to his great master-work."<sup>7</sup>

The following quotation is a typical prose passage from Chaucer's treatise on Penance:

"And therefore oure Lord Jesu Crist seith thus: 'by the fruit of hem ye shul knowen hem.' Of this rote eek springeth a seed of grace, the which seed is moder of sikernes, and this seed is egre and hoot. The grace of this seed springeth of God, thurgh remembrance of the day of dome and on the peynes of helle. Of this matere seith Salomon, that 'in the drede of god man forleteth his sinne.' The hete of this seed is the love of god, and the desiring of the joye perdurable."<sup>8</sup>

We say it is a typical passage. It is rather typical of the doctrinal part of the sermon. Justice can hardly be done to the work in such a short quotation. Certainly the author had a very clear grasp of his subject and

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7. Ten Brink, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 183, ed. Wm. C. Robinson, Ph. D. D.

8. Chaucer, *The Persones Tale*.

exhibits a knowledge of the doctrines involved that would do credit to a churchman of distinction. Is it presuming to suppose that Chaucer was penning another of his realistic pictures? The subject is repentance and penance; the thoughts of one grown very serious; the thoughts of a youth, who had laughed not in scorn, whose soul sparkled to overflowing with mirth as he rollicked and played while the sun was high, but in the shadows of evening, bethinking himself of the day, grew serious and concerned about the things that really count. Can we picture the poet grown old; beneath the pulpit, listening with attention and the docility of a child to the consoling words of his beloved "parson": "Our swete lord god of hevene, that no man wol perisse, but wol that we come alle to the knoweleche of him, and to the blisful lyf that is perdurable."<sup>9</sup>

There is charm in the simplicity of these didactic passages, and a rhythm that one would expect from "The Father of English Versification," but a rhythm not indicative of the author's real power. There is a logical sequence and unity of thought, less emphatic perhaps, but more ascertainable than in Wycliffe; and an originality of expression and freedom from conventional Latin treatise forms that surpass Pecock. However, the simplicity of phrasing, and the regular rhythmical sameness become interminable. Pecock becomes tedious in his attempt to be exhaustive; Chaucer because of his simplicity.

Pecock was not alone in his knowledge and command of the technique of prose. Chaucer had a very comprehensive knowledge of the science of prose composition, as well as a mastery over verse. The music of his periods is light and thin even in his attempts to be very serious; quite unlike the stentorian roll of Pecock's periods.

As we have noted before, the frequency with which Pecock and Wycliffe made use of both the periodic and loose sentence, was a fault of construction, a fault com-

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9. Ibid.



mon in the period. In Chaucer, the simple sentence is employed more freely and oftener. Chaucer, undoubtedly, understood all these devices of rhetoric and did not hesitate to employ them. The following quotation, a prayer of repentance on the part of the poet himself, a regret for some of his compositions that may have given scandal and done harm, is an instance of the use of the period, rather than a great prose selection:

“But of the translacion of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bokes of Legendes of seintes, and omelies and moralitee, and devocioun, that thanke I oure Lord Jesu Crist and his blisful moder, and alle the seintes of hevene; bisekinge him that they from hennes forth, unto my lyves ende, sende me grace to biwayle my giltes, and to studie to the salvacioun of my soule:—and graunte my grace of verray penitence, confessioun and satisfacioun to doon in this present lyf; thurgh the benigne grace of him that is king of kinges and preest over all preestes, that boghte us with the precious blood of his herte; so that I may been oon of hem at the day of dome that shulle be saved.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus far we have been treating of the more general outlines of Pecoek's prose form. In the course of the study we have noted also some of the general characteristics of prose form as seen from two of the leading literary men of the period. There are, however, other qualities that must be sought out in the study of an author. Some of these we have suggested merely, in the foregoing study, and it will be our endeavor in the remaining part of this chapter to dwell upon them at greater length and detail.

There is no set formula by which the merits of a literary production can be estimated. Literary critics are not unanimous in their conclusions; nor can they be,

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10. Conclusion of, “The Persones Tale.”

since literary criticism is an art rather than a science; its conclusions are the result of feeling and appreciation rather than hard and fast rules. However, there are certain fundamentals, comprehending the whole field of both prose and poetry, upon which all more or less agree. There are certain qualities of style that may be present in any literary work; and certain of these, not all, concomitantly, must be present if the production is to be classified as literature properly so called. There are the intellectual qualities of style that correspond to the element of thought; the emotional qualities arising from the appeal to the emotions; the imaginative corresponding to the element of ideality, and the aesthetic qualities arising from the melody and harmony.

The intellectual qualities of style are not necessarily artistic, although they may form a true basis of style. In works of a didactic nature, such as our author executed, it is seen without a second glance that the intellectual qualities are a prime requisite; all other qualities are secondary and subordinate. "A great author," says Cardinal Newman, "is not one who merely has a '*copia verborum*,' whether in prose or verse, and can, as it were turn on at his will any number of splendid phrases and swelling sentences; but he is one who has something to say and knows how to say it."<sup>11</sup> Pecock had something to say and he said it with a logic that is almost irrefutable, and with an unction and zeal that are contagious. Even the modern reader loses sight of the archaisms, and the unusual phrasing and expression. The ingenious methods of attack and defense in the argument; the copious outpouring of language in dignified harmonious rhythm, are sufficient to arrest the attention, bearing it eagerly on from major premise to conclusion.

These general observations are not meant to be absolute but must be qualified. There are particular instances where Pecock descends to sophistry. A strik-

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11. Newman, *Idea of a University*, Literature.

ing example of this is in the *Repressor* where he attempts to prove that the ruse of the friars in counting money with a stick was not inconsistent with their vows of poverty. There are also instances of inconsistencies which give one the impression that the author is arguing for argument's sake. An instance of this is in his argument for submission to the teaching church, "the hool chirche of the clergie," in which he denounces the Lollard for relying upon his own individual reason in the interpretation of Scripture. He says in part, "And if thou wolte pretende thi natural resoun forto be so cleer in his nature, into the fynding of right and dew undirstanding of Holy Scripture, that thi natural witt schal do as myche as alle the natural resouns of al the clergie of the chirche, etc."<sup>12</sup> On the other hand he extols the reasoning of an individual above that of a general council, when he says, "For certis, it may be that sum oon symple persooone as in fame, or in state, is wiser forto knowe, iuge, and declare what is the trewe sense of a certeyn porcioun of Scripture, and what is the treuthe of sum article, and that for his longe studyng, laboring, and avising therupon, than is a greet general conceil."<sup>13</sup>

Pecock resorts to sophistry and arrives at conclusions unworthy of his intelligence. He does not mean that the intelligence of a simple individual is superior to the combined intelligence of all the members of a council. If this were conceded, a great portion of his saner and past reasoning in both the *Repressor* and *Book of Faith* becomes mere sophistry and contradictory. In this particular instance he confuses the influence that the individual by his eloquence and persuasive abilities may have upon the whole assembly, with that of the individual's intellectual powers.

There is another fault to be found in Pecock's works taken individually. It may seem inconsistent, since we

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12. Pecock, *Book of Faith*, ed. Morison, Part I, Ch. X.

13. Ibid. Part II, Ch. IV.

have already observed that his method of argumentation is very exhaustive, to state in a second breath that in certain respects he was not sufficiently exhaustive in his treatment of his subject-matter. The individual treatise, and this is especially noticeable in the *Book of Faith*, leaves the reader with suspended judgment as to the author's opinions in certain fine points of orthodoxy. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that the individual treatise was one of a series, each of which supplemented the other. The author seemed to realize that certain of his arguments needed additional expansion, and for this reason we frequently find references to other works where the subject is treated more at length. Such are references to *The book of presthode*,<sup>14</sup> *The book of the chirche*,<sup>15</sup> *Iust apprising of Holi Scripture*,<sup>16</sup> *the iust apprising of doctouris*,<sup>17</sup> and numerous other references. Unfortunately these works are no longer extant, and our conclusions regarding the author's opinions will always have to be received with qualifications. Certainly, definite charges of heresy were made at his trial, after a great number of his works were supposed to have been examined. However, in the light of those works still with us, all of the charges can not be substantiated, and about the majority of them an atmosphere of suspicion hangs. One gets the impression that with a friendlier body of judges Pecoek could have explained away, if not all, at least the majority of the accusations.

Again, Pecoek at times in his argument has recourse to a hypothesis. Later, and remotely removed from the hypothetical statement, other misleading observations are made which can not be thoroughly understood unless considered in relation to the hypothesis. From a literary point of view, this is a lack of clearness and simplicity. Very frequently this statement appears: "Every singuler personne . . . is bounden, undir peyne of dampnaci-

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14 and 15. Ibid., Pt. I, Ch. X.

16 and 17. Ibid. Pt. I, Ch. III.

oun, for to bileeve thilk same article as feith . . . though the chirche theryne bileeved or determyned falseli or amys."<sup>18</sup> The real significance of such a statement can not be properly understood unless considered in relation to the observation made by Pecock in the prologue to *The Book of Faith*, where the author remarks that it is useless to appeal to this "lay party" on the ground that the Church or a General Council is infallible, since they would only laugh one to scorn. However, he will prove from reason to this "lay party" that "we owen to bileeve and stonde to sum seier or techer which may faile, while it is not knowe that thilk seier or techer theryne failith."<sup>19</sup>

Naturally the more aesthetic qualities of style, artistic qualities properly so called, such as the emotional appeal, pathos, and the ludicrous, are not to be found in any marked degree in any of Pecock's works. The very nature of his subject-matter would exclude them, and what is more, the elementary state of development of prose language did not lend itself to the expression of those finer qualities which are so characteristic of the literary essay and treatise of a later and more plastic period. As has been noted before, the great poets and literary artists of the period<sup>20</sup> had not come to realize the possibilities of the essay or treatise as a literary form properly so called. Chaucer's prose can not be ranked with his verse.

The dialectical powers are the outstanding characteristics of our author. However, that which is next in importance and supplementary to the other great gifts is his ability to illustrate his point by means of a homely striking example. In proof of the conclusion that truths of natural law are not founded in Holy Scripture, he

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18. Pt. I, Ch. VII, *ibid.*

19. Prologue, *Book of Faith*.

20. Really Chaucer was the only great artist, unless we consider the Scotch school immediately following 1400 A. D.

makes use of the homely old custom<sup>21</sup> of countrymen bringing, on Midsummer Eve, flowers and branches of trees to the citizens of London, with which they could decorate their houses. He observes that the flowers and branches did not grow out of the carts and hands of the countrymen, but had their foundation in the land. Another striking example is that of Christ and his Apostles bringing fish which they had caught. His comment on this is that God forbid, that men for reverence would take such liberty with truth as to say that the fish grew out of the hands of Christ or the Apostles, and not in the sea.<sup>22</sup>

Pecock's illustrations are homely but forceful. His originality and power of expression is best set forth in his applying an example. Here for an instant he forgets his academic phrasing and for an instant we see and hear the author. He warns the "Bible men" against the danger of dissension. They remind him of the dogs in the market place who snarl and tear one another. Moreover, they should not forget what the same sort of dissension did for Bohemia where the city and University of Prague were destroyed. This was all to no avail, for after the destruction the people were glad to return to the unity of the Catholic and universal faith and doctrines of the Church.<sup>23</sup>

He draws a very striking picture of a "learned" doctor of the period. Sarcasm is in every line, and beneath the surface one can not help but detect the quiet humour.<sup>24</sup>

Reginald Pecock, in the estimation of some men was candid to a fault. There is indeed that open sincerity and frankness about him that made him one of his own greatest enemies, but an openness and sincerity that endears him to the unbiased observer. He communicates

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21. *Repressor*, Pt. I, Ch. VI.

22. *Ibid.* Pt. I, Ch. VI.

23. *Repressor*, Pt. I, Ch. VI.

24. *Ibid.* Pt. I, Ch. XVI.



this quality to his writings. It shows through in every paragraph. Tolerant he was with the common weaknesses of men, but for the insincere man he held no brief. Like the Master Himself, he rose in his might and scourged them forth. For the egotistical strutting doctor he had naught but caustic denunciation; the pleasant popular preachers among the friars were "pulpit bawlers"; for the misguided, illiterate Lollard he had gentle, kindly, fatherly advice, while their leaders were to him "hypocrites, adulterers and lecherous men." Nor was he a respecter of persons. A lover of authority, yes, but not a fawning sycophant.

It is amusing and almost approaching the ludicrous to hear Pecock state that his purpose in his works was to conciliate the lay party. Conciliation is an incongruous term when applied to the author of the Repressor. In addition to the many uncomplimentary things which we have already observed, our author in the following passage gives expression to his method which is typical of his idea of conciliation. He says, "And if thou wolte pretende thi natural resoun forto be so cleer in his nature. into the fynding of the right and dew understanding of Holi Scripture, that thi natural witt schal do as myche as alle the natural resouns of al the clergie of the chirche, . . . which thing is ful unlikli, that noon in al the multitude of clergie is now, or hath be so cleer in such witt as thou art, etc."<sup>25</sup>

There is one final passage that should be seen at length. It is important first of all for its literary qualities; it is one of Pecock's great prose passages. None other of his possesses the outstanding characteristics of good prose as does this one. It is also important insofar as it sheds considerable light upon any doubt that may arise regarding Pecock's formal attitude towards the universal Church and her teachings. He remarks as follows: "And thanne aftir alle these thus bifore going

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25. *Book of Faith*, Pt., Ch. X.

argumentis, y argue ferther thus. Sithen who ever bi ful avisement agenstondith God, and his ordynaunce, puttith him into dampnable synne, and perel of dampnacioun, it folowith that who ever avisidli agenstondith, and unobeith the prelatis of the chirche, in cause and mater of feith teching, and leernying, and fulfilling, without the seid excepcioun, he therynne synnyth deedli and dampnabili. Wolde God that lay peple hadden in her modir tunge the epistilis of Seynt Ignace, the blissid and holi martir, and disciple of Seint Johnne evangelist, and whom Denyee hath in comendacioun bi writing in his book of Goddis Namyngis. For certis, red y never in no mannys writingis, so tendirli charchid, the obeischaunce to bischopis and to preestis as is there in his writing ofte chargid. How holi a man he was, and hou greet a doer in the chirche, in the daies, and bischop, yhe, patriarke of the greet Antioche, may be rad in a storie ioyned to hise epistlis, which storie was writen in tho same daies bi a persone which knewe sureli, as he there knowlechith, al the persecucioun of Ignacis martirdom. Ech man and woman therefore be ware, and bise himsilf hou he stondith in the point of this present purpos. For feithfulli forto seie, manye which holden him silf ful cleene from dampnable synne, and ful perfit lovers and kepers of Goddis lawe, ben, in as myche as y can deme, in the now tretid and spokum dampnable synne, so that, for al her glorie of her conscience, thei stonden in case of the gospel; that a litil sowrdough in her soule corruptith al the lumpe of her conversacioun and servyce to God. . . And therefore, as y seid bifore, allas and out upon so greet blindness in hem, which pretenden hem to be of more kunnyng than other in Goddis lawe, and clepen hem silf therfore knowing men. Verili to seie, this pride and presumpcioun stynkith bifore God; yhe and peraventure more than the synmys of othere men, which thei in her hertis bittirli condempen. And if y schulde seie my feling, peraventure the unobedience of

Adam and Eve was not so myche gilty, neither the pride of Lucifer; but whether this be trewe or no, y remitte it to God; but herof y muste holde me sikir, that if Lucifer and Adam were in dampnable synne for her pride, and presumpsioun, and unobedience, forsothe as forto iuge bi the comoun lawe of God, goven to alle Cristen men, alle the now bifore spokun agenstonders to prelatys of the chirche ben, for thilke agenstonding, in dampnable synne, and ellis the seid comoun lawe of God were not trewe."<sup>26</sup>

There are a few more observations to be made regarding Pecock's style. There is a certain use of words and phrases that is characteristically Pecock. The author of the *Repressor*, as we have already observed, is, in his treatment of a subject, exhaustive to a fault. Nevertheless, it is Pecock; it is the mentality of the man. In his exemplification of a point of argument, we have seen that one simile or metaphor or example does not satisfy him, but they must be multiplied until the repetition becomes tedious. So also in his use of words and phrases he attempts to be exhaustive. Scarcely a paragraph of his various writings can be found in which the arrangement of words and phrases such as the following is not to be found. There is redundancy in his use of words, which he combines into rhythmical pairs such as: "seier or techer"; "credence and faith"; "word and speche"; "remove and take away"; "admitte and graunte"; "gendrith and getith"; "leerne and gete"; "erre and faile"; "acceptid and allowid"; "denounceid and enformed"; "ordynatli and formabli"; "concluding and schewing"; "opener and clerer"; "telling or denouncing"; "bi another wey, and in another maner."

Also a triplex combination of words, as: "bifore spokun *attendaunce*, *herkenyng*, and *heering*"; "writyng, fynding and knowing"; "opener, and clerer, and sickerer"; "provyng and concluding and schewing"; "unworthiest and yongist and lowest"; "iuge, deeme,

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26. *Ibid.*, Pt. i, Ch. VII, pp. 189-194.

and consent"; "to be sende, and to be govun or lende abroad"; "must go, and proceede, and be maad."

Also the frequent use of such phrases as: "now spokun"; "now errying"; "ful ofte"; "more and higher treteng"; "bifore writen"; "last givun"; "bifore seid"; "wel avisid"; "so gete"; "therfore doyng"; "bifore knew"; "soner impunge"; "rehercid there—and there rehercid" (in the same sentence); "never the lasse and never the latter"; "ask and leerne—answer and seie."

There is also the Latin use of the verb construction; the sense being suspended by placing the verb or part of the verb construction at the end of the phrase or sentence as "communicacioun schal be with the persoonys had"; or again, "utterly into uce delyvered"; or, "whanne thei it receyveden."

Then, too, there is the frequent recurrence of the Latin sentence construction to be found so prevalent in the Latin treatise of the time. An exemplification of this is to be had in the following: "Wherefore, sithen every opinioun which is not feith is maad the strengre and perfiter in his kinde, bi that that the mo, and the perfiter, and the strengre evydencis perteynyng to his kinde ben had, as no wys clerk wole seie nay, it folowith bi lijk skile that every opinioun which is feith, is maad the strengre and the perfiter in his kinde, bi that the mo and the perfiter and strengre evydencis, perteynyng forto gendre an opinal feith ben."<sup>27</sup>

With these observations we conclude our study of Reginald Pecock and fifteenth century prose. From the beginning, and especially in the latter part of this work, our interests have been primarily literary. The one conviction, it seems to us, that must be the reward for efforts spent in delving into the secrets of fifteenth century letters, is that the period, a prose period, is of a much higher order in a literary way than is ordinarily conceded; and a conviction intimately related to this is, that

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-2.

Reginald Pecock, Bishop of Chichester, and greatest exponent of prose writing of his time, was a man of letters and literary talents of a very high order. Had he continued his literary labours, one feels that the age of More and Fisher and Latimer would have been a generation earlier. Perhaps, too, in the religious affairs of England, had a More or a Fisher been a generation earlier, religious controversy might have taken a different turn.

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## VITA

The author of this dissertation was born in St. Louis, Missouri, June 22, 1891. His recollections of earliest childhood are of those years passed upon a typical Louisiana plantation near St. Gabriel. It was here that he had his first experience at school. Later he removed to Canada where he attended the Grammar and public High Schools at Simcoe, Ontario. In 1908, he entered Assumption College, Sandwich, Ontario. It was in this institution that he came under the influence of that most efficient body of educators the Basilian Fathers. At the end of five happy, profitable years at Sandwich he presented himself as a student for the priesthood to the Bishop of Detroit who sent him to complete his preparatory studies in Theology under the Sulpician Fathers at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, the cradle of the American Priesthood. In the year 1916 he was ordained deacon in Baltimore Cathedral by the late Cardinal Gibbons, and on June 2 of the following year was raised to the priesthood in Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Detroit, Michigan. For two years he was stationed at St. Alouysius Church, Detroit, and at the completion of this term was sent by his bishop to pursue a postgraduate course of studies at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. From this institution he obtained the degree of Master of Arts, and the following year was sent by the Bishop of Detroit to Europe, to continue his studies and research at Oxford, and in the Vatican Archives in Rome. In 1921, he returned to the Catholic University of America to complete his studies for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.

At Oxford he followed courses in English Literature under Sir Walter Raleigh, M. A.; D. Nichol Smith, M. A.; A. J. Carlyle, M. A., D. Litt.; T. Seccombe, M. A.; and at The Catholic University of America, courses under Prof. P. J. Lennox, M. A., D. Litt.; Dr. Gleis and Dr. Geary.









